

Introduction to Vedanta

A Commentary

on

Tattvabodha

by

Swami Paramarthananda

Class-notes — March–April 2008

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Enhanced with 3 charts by JM

1. Embodied Consciousness
2. Sankhya Darshana
3. Tree of Hindu Shastras

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EMBODIED CONSCIOUSNESS - MICROCOSM

THE 3 FORMS (BODIES)	THE 3 STATES (OF EXPERIENCE)	THE 5 ENVELOPES (KOŠAS) (WRAPPINGS OR DISGUISES TO BE PEELED OFF)	7 LEVELS (OF CONSCIOUSNESS)	8 LIMBS (OF RĀJA-YOGA)
<p>ĀSARĪRA ĀTMAN</p> <p>INCORPoreal SPIRIT</p> <p>REAL SELF ĀTMAN</p>	<p>TURĪYA</p> <p>TRANSCENDENT REALITY</p> <p>REAL SELF ĀTMAN</p> <p>SOUNDLESS AUM</p>	<p>5 SUPER-CONSCIOUSNESS</p> <p>4 INTELLECTUAL VISION (UNIVERSALIZES)</p> <p>3 MENTAL REFLECTION (LOCALIZES)</p> <p>2 EMOTION</p> <p>1 SENSATION</p>	<p>SELF/ĀTMAN</p> <p>PADMA/CHAKRA</p> <p>7 SAHĀSARĀRA PADMA</p>	<p>SELF/ĀTMAN</p> <p>ĀTMA-JNĀNA (SELF-REALIZATION)</p>
<p>1 CAUSAL KĀRANA ŚARĪRA</p> <p>SEED-BODY (LASTS UNTIL LIBERATION)</p>	<p>III DREAMLESS SLEEP PRĀJÑA</p> <p>OBJECTLESS AWARENESS</p>	<p>1 KNOWLEDGE ENVELOPE SELF AS UNITY SUBJECT/OBJECT AESTHETIC/MYSTIC EXPERIENCE</p> <p>2 KNOWLEDGE ENVELOPE CONSCIOUSNESS OF BEING AS "I"-JIVA REASONING & DECISION</p> <p>3 MIND ENVELOPE COGITATION - SCANNING MORAL URGES</p> <p>4 ENERGY ENVELOPE VITALITY - BREATH LIFE URGES</p> <p>5 FOOD ENVELOPE MATERIAL, PHYSICAL BODY</p>	<p>7 SAHĀSARĀRA PADMA</p> <p>SHAT-CHAKRAS</p> <p>6 AJĀNA</p> <p>5 VIŠUDDHA</p> <p>4 LAMĀ-HATA</p> <p>3 MANI-PORA</p> <p>2 SVĀDHI-STHĀNA</p> <p>1 MULĀ-DHĀRA</p>	<p>8 SAMĀDHI SUPER-CONSCIOUSNESS</p>
<p>2 SUBTLE SŪKṢMA ŚARĪRA</p> <p>THOUGHTS FEELINGS IMPULSES THAT ANIMATE GROSS BODY</p>	<p>II DREAM TAIJASA</p> <p>KNOWING INWARD</p>	<p>TAITTIRIYA UPANIṢAD</p>	<p>7 DHYĀNA MEDITATION</p>	<p>6 DHĀRANĀ CONCENTRATION</p>
<p>3 GROSS STHŪLA ŚARĪRA</p> <p>VISIBLE, PALPABLE BODY</p>	<p>I WAKING VIŚVA</p> <p>KNOWING OUTWARD</p>	<p>3 ĀSANA STEADY POSTURE</p> <p>BASIC DISCIPLINES</p> <p>2 NIYAMA OBSERVANCES</p> <p>1 YAMA ABSTENTIONS</p>	<p>4 PRĀNĀYĀMA STEADY BREATH</p>	<p>3 ĀSANA STEADY POSTURE</p> <p>BASIC DISCIPLINES</p> <p>2 NIYAMA OBSERVANCES</p> <p>1 YAMA ABSTENTIONS</p>

SĀMKHYA DARŚANA

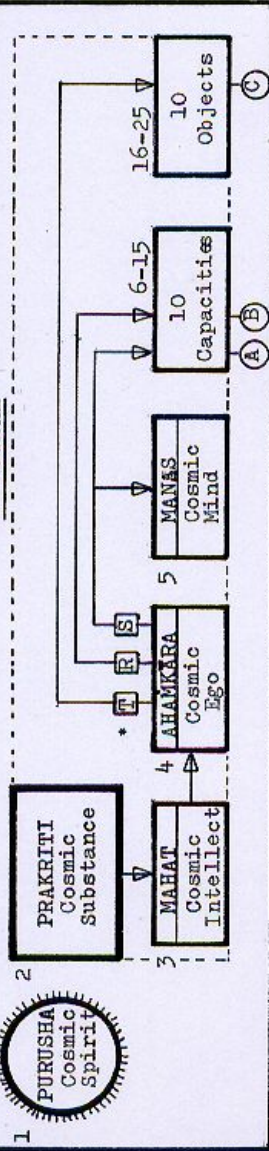
(1+24 = 25 COSMIC PRINCIPLES)

Founder: KAPILA (abt 600 BC)

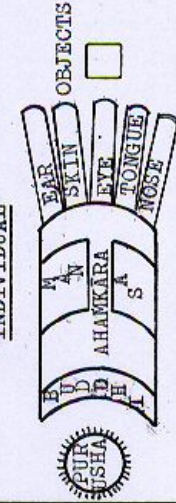
The GUNAS (qualities, tendencies, or forces) which characterize all the manifestations ('internal' & 'external') of PRAKRITI (nature).

GUNAS	REVEALS	EXPRESSES	LIFE	THINK	SENSATION	SPACE	WHITE	ETC
SATTVA	ACTIVATES	DISTORTS	ENERGY	FEEL	ACTION	TIME	RED	ETC
RAJAS	RESTRAINS	OBSCURES	MATTER	WILL	POTENTIAL	CAUSE	BLACK	ETC
TAMAS								

'UNIVERSAL'

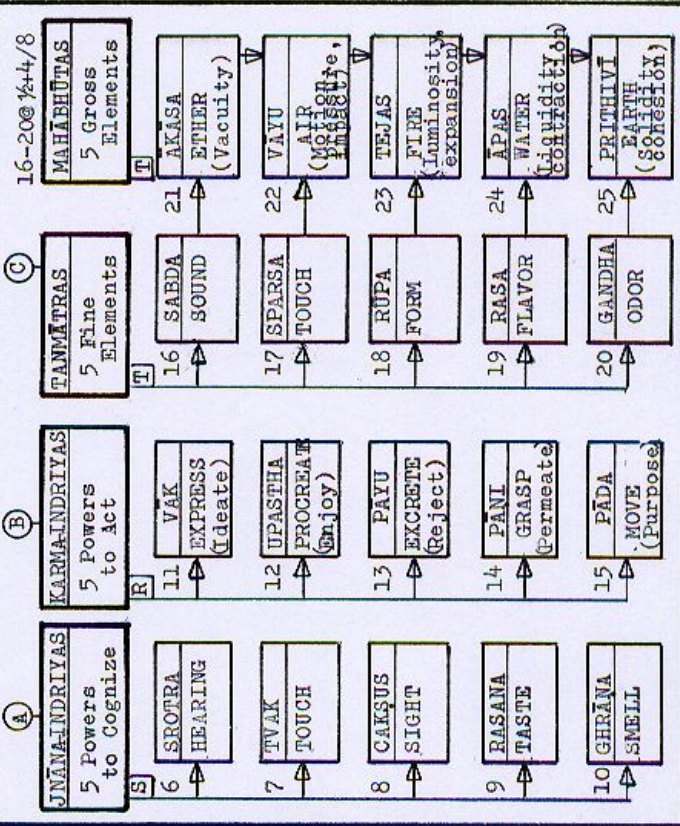


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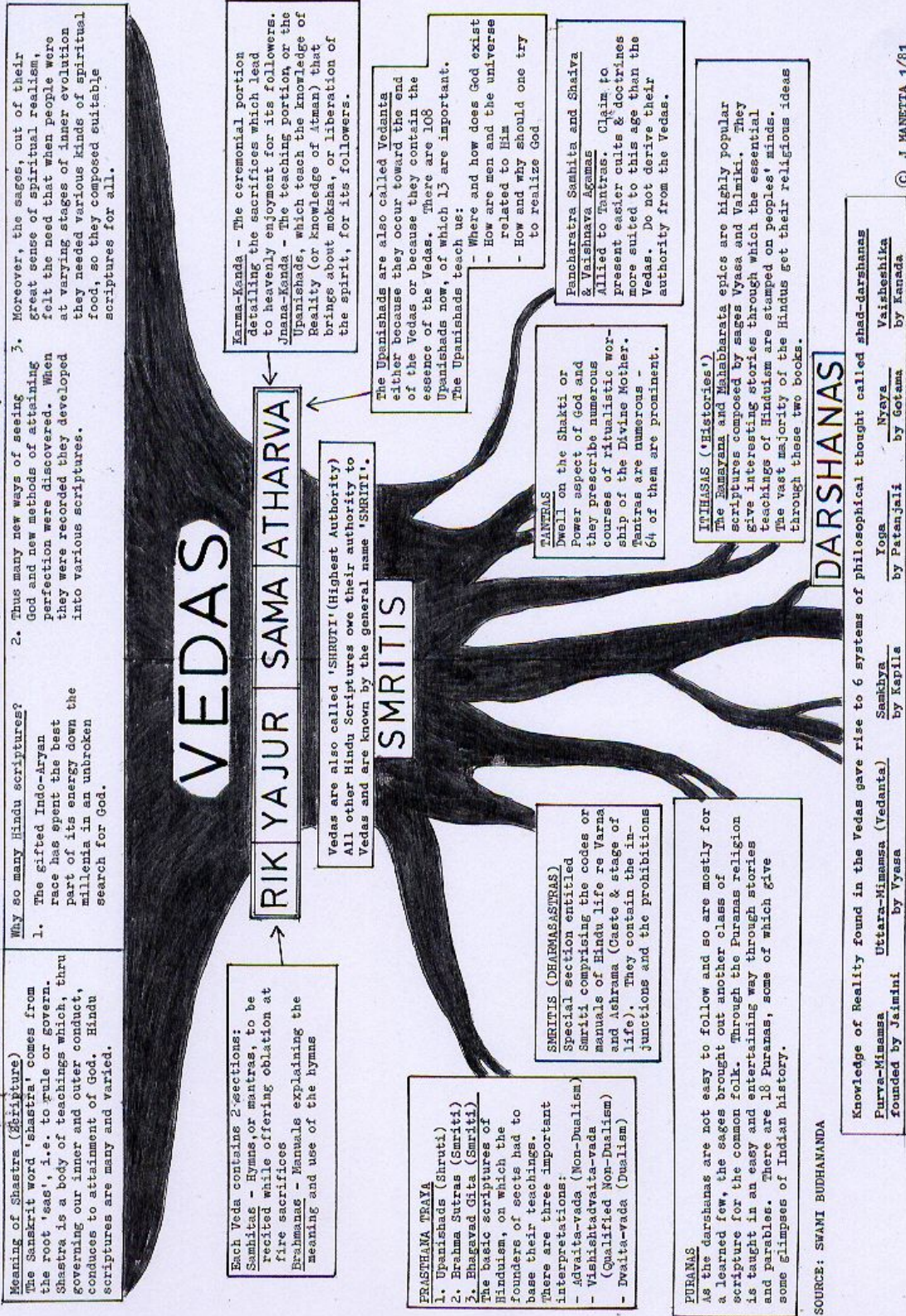


The Sāmkhya system is a philosophy of emancipation which trains us to distinguish between SPIRIT and MATTER thru a purely logical and scientific exposition of the universe as a sum-total of 25 evolving cosmic categories. This distinction, when fully realized thru appropriate means, leads the SEER to regain its 'independence' from the SEEN.

The Sāmkhya is the philosophical foundation of all Oriental culture, the measure of all Hindu literature, the basis for all knowledge of the ancient sages (ṛṣis), and the key to all Oriental symbolism.



THE TREE OF HINDU SCRIPTURES (SHASTRAS) - WITH ROOT ABOVE AND BRANCHES BELOW



SOURCE: SWAMI BUDHANANDA



Swami Paramarthananda

Introduction to Vedānta

Based on lectures by Swāmi Paramārthānanda

Thursday, 20 March 2008

Introduction

Hari Om.

Thanks for visiting the blog. After the introductions, it is now time to proceed with the next step – starting the course “Introduction to Vedānta”. We will start our course of Vedānta in the next few sessions. Our study will be based on the framework provided by a scriptural work called **Tattvabodha**.

Tattvabodha is a work in prose form, that has been attributed to Shankarāchārya. There is still some debate as to whether it is Ādi Shankarāchārya or another Āchārya in the Paramparā. But this detail need not worry us. What should be kept in mind is that Tattvabodha is a fundamental and important work in understanding higher texts of Vedānta like Bhagavad Gītā, Upanishads and Brahma Sūtra. Tattvabodha introduces us to important terms used in Vedāntik scriptures which every ardent student of Vedānta should be aware of. The following posts on the blog are taken from Swāmi Paramārthānanda’s classes in Madras.

However we will not be seeing the word for word translation of Tattvabodha, here. Tattvabodha in its original form, assumes that the student has already got a strong knowledge on the fundamentals and is aware of the basic technical terms used throughout the scriptures. But this may not always be the case. There are many of us who may be interested in the subject but do not know where to start from, what to focus on and to what depth we should study initially. Swāmi Paramārthānanda has addressed this issue very beautifully in this course of study.

Using Tattvabodha as a framework, Swāmiji first explains the basics by talking about our scriptures, Varna Āshrama Dharma, Yoga, principle of God etc. After dealing with these fundamentals, Swāmiji then takes up Tattvabodha addressing each topic in the proper sequence. Swāmiji walks us thorough the important concepts and technical words used, which will then form the basis for future study of Vedānta.

Hence, this course is more aptly called “Introduction to Vedānta”. This course is suited for anybody who has got a thirst to understand our Vedic scriptures and does not know where to start from.

Let us start this vital and basic study by offering our prayers to Goddess Sarasvati.

सरस्वति नमस्तुभ्यम् वरदे कामरूपिणि

विद्यारम्भम् करिष्यामि सिद्धिर्भवतु मे सदा

sarasvati namastubhyam varade kāmārūpini

vidyārambham karishyāmi siddhirbhavatu me sadā

O Goddess Saraswati, salutations to you, the giver of boons, the one who fulfills all desires. I begin my studies. May there always be accomplishments for me.

Friday, 21 March 2008

1. Purushārtha – Insight into Human Pursuits

The word Purushārtha means Human Goals. Purusha refers to a human being (male / female). Hence the word Purushārtha can be translated to Manushyārtha. And the word Artha in Sanskrit has several meanings e.g. 'meaning', 'wealth'. In this context it refers to a Goal, destination.

Arthyate Sarvaihi Manushyaihi Prārthyate Iti Artha

That which is sought after by every human being. Therefore any human goal is called Artha.

Hence Purushārtha primarily means Human Goals. The word Purushārtha by itself is used in other secondary meanings also in the Shāstrams - Free-Will, Choice, Effort or Endeavour [Prayatna]. By using the word Purushārtha we convey an important idea that these are goals sought after only by human beings, not animals or plants. And because of the availability of Purushārtha, the human beings become different from other animals or plants. And because of the Purushārtha, the human beings are considered superior to all the other living beings.

And how come human beings alone have these Purushārtha ? What faculty of human being makes him endowed with this unique opportunity to have Purushārtha ? The Shāstrams themselves declare, human beings are no doubt very similar to animals and plants in several respects. There are lots of common features [Sadharmyam], but there is one unique feature that makes the human being superior. This is presented by the Shloka

Āhāra Nidrā Bhaya Maithunam Cha
Sāmānyametad Pashubhir Narānām
Bhuddhir Hi Tesham Adhiko Visheshaha
Buddhya Vihīnaha Pashubhir Samānaha

Human beings and other beings are similar in several respects :

- all seek food,

- taking rest or sleeping,
- fear of the external world : sense of insecurity and therefore trying to protect self propagation of one's own species.
- The differentiating factor is intellect, faculty of thinking, judging, reasoning, projecting the future, farsightedness, planning for future and working for the betterment of the future – the rational faculty.

Since Buddhihi alone makes a human being superior or different from animals, without this faculty of intellect (if you do not have or do not use it) the human beings are as good as animals only. And therefore Buddhihi is unique. Because of this extra faculty only, we are extremely self-conscious also, capable of self-judgement, capable of comparing ourselves with other human beings of the same species. The animals are not capable of this. Once a complex is developed, there is a thinking of improving oneself in the future and therefore planning for the future becomes a natural consequence of Buddhihi faculty. Hence, self-consciousness, self complex development, self judgement, and therefore projection of the future hoping that one will be better off. And for the improvement of the future, one starts planning. The plans is cut into several levels of immediate goals and long term goals.

Only humans are capable of having this tendency. All the animals and plants have an instinctive lifestyle. Their entire life is governed by instincts whereas human beings are governed not only by instincts but predominantly by the capacity to choose their future. And because of this choice, the human being entertains a lot of goals and these are called Purushārtha.

The next question is how many such goals are possible ? Any number of such goals are possible, but they can be classified into four categories – Chaturvidha Purushārtha. Any goal to be accomplished will come under one of these four only. The four goals are:

- Artha,
- Dharma
- Kāma
- Moksha

1.1. Artha Purushārtha – Goals for security

This starts early in life. In this context, it refers to security. Anything that is procured for the sake of security comes under Artha. By security, only sheer physical survival is being referred to. Right from birth one instinctive and natural urge every living being, including human being, has is the urge to survive. And anything that is procured for the security of the self, those objects which contribute to the security, physical survival will come under Artha. This helps in removing the sense of insecurity. Broadly these are:

- Food
- Clothing : this includes clothes for self, helmets for security, seat belts for security,

- breathing filters
- Shelter
- Health : fighting all forms of diseases

Anything that is procured to take care of all these four to safeguard the survival comes under Artha Goals. In the beginning, it refers to the security of the self at present. Then it refers to security of the future. This is because in old age, one cannot work or earn and the level of security is not there. In the olden days children were the security for the old age. Taking insurance against the future has to be taken into consideration. Then comes the next layer of security. Once a few things or people have been possessed for security, the next worry is about their security i.e. security of security.

Thus for most of our life, we are busy providing for security. Anything that we do to provide for our security comes under Artha Purushārtha or Abhaya Praptyartham – freedom from fear.

The animals also want security but they instinctively take care of this. The Lord provides for this by giving them special properties e.g. skin, hunting skills etc.

Once security is taken care of, there is no threat of survival. Once Artha is taken care of, the next step is Kāma Purushārtha

1.2. Kāma Purushārtha – Goals for comfort

Kāma means all forms of comfort that is not needed for security but when present, can be enjoyed. When present, one is more comfortable or luxurious. All forms of entertainment are Kāma Purushārtha. No entertainment is needed for survival. Any form of music, dance, drama, TV, travel, are examples of Kāma Purushārtha.

This is also sought by animals by instinctively going after comfort. The animals naturally go to shade when under the sun. But in case of human being because of his superior intellect, he plans and entertains himself. Among most of the human being kind, the Artha Purushārtha takes so much time and effort that even passing on to Kāma Purushārtha is difficult.

1.3. Dharma Purushārtha – Invisible wealth

Dharma Purushārtha can be defined as an invisible form of wealth. This is generally translated as good-luck or good-fortune. When the word luck or fortune is used, it is not something that is sought, but it seems to contribute to one's well being. This can be in the form of providing Artha or Kāma. It seems to be an invisible form of wealth contributing to your benefit. Hence in Sanskrit it is called Adrishtam (one that cannot be seen) and in Tamil Adishtam.

This Dharma can be acquired by appropriate means (which will be discussed later). Since Dharma or good-luck or fortune is something that is achievable by appropriate method, Dharma also becomes a human goal. It can also be translated as Punyam. This

Dharma contributes to our well being in twofold ways

One way is, Dharma contributes to our well being in this very life itself, by providing Artha and Kāma. Therefore Dharma is very useful in this life because it contributes to one's well being in addition to one's own effort that also contributes to the Artha and Kāma.

Secondly Dharma also contributes to our next birth. This is particularly applicable to the initial stages of life. During births, the initial few years are certainly not under our control. This includes what type of parents, what family I am born into, what environment, type of upbringing. These factors during the initial stages of life, are certainly not under our control. These are supposed to be determined by Dharma. The Dharma that one acquires now, not only helps in this birth but also in the initial few years of one's next birth. This is by providing good parentage, environment, food, clothing, good values etc. A child's life is heavily determined by the invisible wealth called Good Luck.

The initial few years of human life is so important that it can even determine the future adult life. Many of the emotional conditions in the adulthood are heavily determined by the childhood. Therefore, adult life is determined by childhood life, childhood life is determined by Dharma Purushārtha of the previous life. Thus Dharma directly influences one's present life, influences the future childhood life and Dharma indirectly affects one's future adult life also. Hence Dharma is extremely important. There is an appropriate way of earning [Sampādanam] Dharma.

Hence Artha Kāma Dharma is otherwise called Dharma-Artha-Kāma. Dharma is the subtle powerful one and is enumerated first. These three human goals have many things in common and put together, they are called Preyas. Preyas means Dharma + Artha + Kāma. Also called Bhoga. Anything that is acquired deliberately, legitimately, with planning is called Preyas.

1.4. Moksha Purushārtha – Ultimate Inner Freedom

This is the fourth human goal. Moksha is also known by the name Mukti or Shreya. Moksha can be translated as freedom. This is an inner freedom, freedom from slavery with regards to Preyas or Dharma-Artha-Kāma.

How is a man a slave to Preyas or anything in this world? Any object or person in this world enslaves us in two ways:

An object can enslave by its very absence. When that particular object or person is not there and one feels an absence, emptiness or worthlessness then that object is capable of enslaving us. Because of this, we are obsessed with that object's absence. In Sanskrit it is called Shūnyatā Dvārā Abhāvaha Badhnāti.. There is a feeling of missing or lacking or vacuum.

An object can also enslave by its very presence. Things bind us by their presence by creating burden, strain or tension.

Some objects create problems by their absence and presence. E.g. money.

This slavery with regards to Preyas or external goals is a bondage. Freedom from this slavery, or Self-mastery. I am no more a Dāsa but am a Swāmi. Sāmitvam means that when things are absent, there is no vacuum and when things are present they are not burdensome. Moksha means comfort with and without Dharma-Artha-Kāma. This inner strength, inner maturity, inner mastery is called Moksha or Shreyas.

The first three (Dharma-Artha-Kāma) are secondary Purushārtha while the last one (Moksha) is primary Purushārtha. In the former (Preyas), slavery continues, while in the latter (Shreyas) alone one is no more a slave of anything.

The above are the Chaturvidha Purushārtha

Monday, 24 March 2008

2. Shāstram – Scriptures

In this lesson we will be getting a bird's eye view of our vast scriptural literature, especially the literature available in the Sanskrit Language. Our entire scriptural literature is generally called Shāstram. The word Shāstram is derived from the root Shās which has two meanings – one to command and the other to teach. So Shāstram means a literature which commands the human beings in the initial stages and then teaches the human beings in the later stages. And by way of commanding and teaching, the scriptures saves a person from all human problems and since it teaches, commands, and thus saves the humanity, it is called Shāstram. Shās means to teach and Trā means to save. 'Shāsanāt Trāyate Iti Shāstram' – that which saves the humanity from problems by commandment in the initial stages and by enlightenment in the later stages.

Shankarāchārya compares the Shāstram to a mother. A mother commands the child initially because the child is not mature enough to understand the significance of the commandments. The mother has to even threaten the child. When someone is at a grosser level, the language of commandment and threat is used but when one has grown up sufficiently, gradually we remove commandments and threats and they are replaced by teaching, convincing, enlightenment and elevation. Since our scriptural literature does that job, it is called Shāstram. And this vast scriptural literature can be presented in six layers. These six groups:

2.1. Vedas – “Seen” literature

The first and foremost are the Vedic literature called Vedas in general. The Vedas themselves are a very vast literature consisting of 20,000 and odd mantras. It is a very vast literature and the entire Vedic literature is divided into four books known as Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sāma Veda and Atharvana Veda.

Rig Veda consists of Rig mantras which are in the form of metrical composition, poetic compositions or Padya compositions. Yajur Veda consists of Yajur mantras which are prose compositions in the form of prose or Gaddya Rupena. Sāma Veda consists of Sāma

mantras in the form of music – Gīti Rūpa Mantra – and it is said that Indian music is derived from Sāma Veda. Hence only the chanting of Sāma Veda is called Sāma Gānam. Atharvana Veda consists of mantras mostly given out by two well known Rishīs – Atharva Rishi and Angiras Rishi. Therefore also called Atharva Veda. The word mantra is used only for Vedic compositions.

More than 20,000 such Vedic mantras are available and they are known as mantras because they are meant for enquiry, analysis and assimilation. *Mananāt Trāyate Iti Mantra*. Mananam means analytical study. Trāyate means it will protect us if we enquire into that. According to our tradition even mere repetition of the mantras, the meditation on the mantras is capable of helping a person. And the very word Vedas indicates a source of knowledge. It is derived from root Vid to know and the word Veda means a mine of information, a treasure house of knowledge.

Vedana Sādhanatvāt Vedaha

Pramānatvāt Vedaha.

Who is the author of the Vedas? In our tradition we look upon the Vedas as a revelation from the Lord himself. We do not look upon the Vedas as human composition, they are not products of human intellect. They are revelations from the Lord himself, and therefore if you want to talk of the author, God is the author of the Vedas. God does not give out the Vedas directly to humanity, but reveals the Vedas to the humanity through the media called Rishayaha (Rishīs). Thus Rishīs are the intermediaries, the pipelines through whom we receive the Veda mantras. So if you take God as the transmitting station, Rishīs are the receiving centres. The word Rishi is derived from Sanskrit root Rish – to know. *Rishati Jānāti Iti Rishihi*. In our context we take the Rishīs as the receiving set of the teaching transmitted by the Lord exactly like the television. Our minds cannot receive the waves because they are not equipped for that. But if our television set is tuned to a particular channel, then we receive the desired channels. Same way with ourselves. The Lord has transmitted the Vedic teachings in the creation, along with the creation itself, but we do not have the equipment to receive but the Rishīs are considered special beings because of their extraordinary medium. This is because of their Sattva and Vishesha Upādhi, they are able to receive and therefore Veda mantras transmitted by the Lord and received by the Rishīs.

There are many Rishīs who have received the mantras. Hence in tradition when a Veda mantra is chanted, they start by remembering the Rishīs first as an expression of gratitude. Even in the daily Sandhyāvandanam we call upon Savitriyā Rishihi Vishvāmitraha (saying and touching the head indicating remembering the contribution of the sage). Then the meter in which it is composed Nichrut Gayatri Chandaha – touching the mouth, then Savitā Devatā – the deity which is talked about through the mantra. So Rishi – Chando - Devatā Smaranam is compulsory before chanting any Vedic mantra. This indicates that this particular Rishi has received this mantra. Hence Rishīs are called mantra Drashtāraha – those who have seen and received the mantras. They are not the

producers or creators of the mantras.

These Vedas were primarily received and transmitted in Shabda Rūpa alone. They were not written. For a long very long time, the Vedas existed only in Shabda Rūpa and not in the form of script and that is why we don't have a specific script for Sanskrit language. Because it was never written the Rishīs also transmitted to their disciples only verbally and the Shishyāhā have to hear and learn. It was a Karna Paramaparā not a Hasta Paramaparā. And since Vedas came down in the form of Karna Paramaparā, it is also known as Shrutihi. *Guru Sakāshāt Shrūyate Iti Shrutihi. Guru Upadeshena Shruyate Iti Shutihi* – that which is received by hearing. Thus it is called Vedas, Mantra, Shrutihi. Since it is not born out of human intellect, it being of supra-human origin, it is known as *Apaurusheya Pramānam*. Apaurusheya means not born out of human intellect. Pramānam meaning source of knowledge. So these Vedas form the first foremost and primary scriptural literature. And all the other scriptural literature are based on this Vedic foundation only and that is why our culture is called Vedic culture – Vaidika Sampradāya and we are all called Vaidikas. Hindu is a name given by somebody else. This is layer one.

2.2. Sūtra – Aphoristic (“Nutshell”) literature

The second layer is known as Sūtra literature. This is a literature which is in the form of Sūtra or aphorism - A short pithy instructive saying. Aphorism refers to a cryptic statement which contains lot of ideas in capsule form – nutshell statement or capsule statements.

Alpāksharam Asandigdham Sāravat Vishvatomukham.

This Sūtra literature consists of Vedic teachings only in a codified form. So the function of Sūtra literature is codification and clarification of the Vedic teaching.

Codification means classification and rearrangement based on topics. While Vedas is a vast literature containing several topics strewn all over in an unorganised manner, in Sūtra literature the ideas are culled from various places and they are arranged topic wise, hence a topical classification. E.g. all teachings dealing with individual values, duties and responsibilities, we call it Dharma Sūtrāni. Grihya Sūtrāni deals with family values, family responsibilities. In Grihya Sūtrāni there is a slight expansion from individual to family. Then comes literature called Shrauta Sūtrāni where bigger activities meant for welfare of entire society are talked about. This deals with big prayers, rituals and functions not for individual wellbeing but for universal harmony. And one cannot isolate himself from any one sect – a person is an individual, a member of a family and a social member also.

Thus we have a very vast Sūtra literature written by several Rishīs. Gautama Sūtrāni, Āpastambha Sūtrāni, Parāshara Sūtrāni are other examples. These compositions are not given out by God. While the Veda is supposed to be authored by God Himself, the Sūtrāni literature comes out from the human intellect only – Paurusheya Shāstram. The difference is that words belong to the authors but the content is borrowed from the Vedas only.

Clarification is yet another function of the Sūtrāni. If there are certain vague statements in the Vedas, the Sūtrāni will clarify. Similarly if there are seemingly contradictory

statements, then the Sūtrāni will resolve the contradictions. Hence codification plus clarifications are done by the Sūtra literature. The very word Sūtram has 'thread' as one of its meanings. The literature is called a thread, because it threads the topics contained in the Vedas.

Veda Vākya Kusuma Grathanārtattvāt Sūtrānām.

The Vedic topics are like flowers which are loose flowers strewn all over. These flowers are collected (classification) and are tied and presented in the form of wonderful garland.

2.3. Smṛithi – “Remembered” (Clarificatory literature)

The Smṛitis are generally in the form of poem. It is a metrical literature. As the word Smṛitis shows it is remembered wisdom i.e. the Rishīs study the Vedas, Sūtrāni and having gathered all the teachings in the Shruti and Sūtrāni, they again present it in a very elaborate form. In Sūtra literature it is only cryptic presentation, but in Smṛiti literature it is slightly elaborated. The function of the Smṛiti is also codification and clarification. Thousands and thousands of verses are written by several Rishīs e.g. Manu Smṛiti, Parāshara Smṛiti, Yāgnavalkya Smṛiti. If you take a Smṛiti book and see the topics, you will see that they are very beautifully arranged. They talk about cosmology – how the creation arose, the duties and goals of life – student, householder, citizen, male and females. The difference between Sūtrāni and Smṛiti is that the Sūtrāni are cryptic and therefore there can be vagueness whereas in the Smṛiti, they have got a wider elbowroom to explain. In Sūtra literature, many ideas are implicit. The implicit ideas are made explicit in the Smṛiti. Hidden ideas are brought to light – Āvishkāraha. This is also an equally vast literature.

Generally our scriptural literature has three different forms:

- Prose : If it is a prose form as in the Vedic literature, there is svāra or intonation, which will be useful for chanting.
- Verse : If it is not chant-able prose, then it is in the form of cryptic statements or verse form. This is so that we can learn them by heart. If we want to memorise the entire Vedas we can do that. Sometimes it is in the form of Sūtrāni which is cryptic and short, it is in capsule form to remember.
- Poems : The other form is poems. The entire philosophy is presented in Gītā which we can chant. Philosophy can be chanted. Here philosophy is composed and presented in poetic form.

This is the third layer of literature Smṛiti Granthaha and this also comes under Pauruṣeya Shāstram. The composition is human but the content is divine. But in the Vedas the composition and content are divine.

2.4. Purāna – Popularising literature

The fourth layer of teachings are Purāna. They are a literature which are in a further expanded form. Purāna are still more magnified than Smṛiti. The very word Purāna means

though it is a very ancient literature, it is relevant even now. It is ancient but not obsolete. Purā Api Navaha. Ancient and ever Fresh and relevant even for the 21st century. You cannot ignore or discard them without losing something. This Purāna literature is also in the form of poems and they also codify, clarify and magnify the topics from the Vedic teachings.

Another important and unique job of the Purāna is that the abstract ideas contained in the previous literature are all concretely presented in the form of stories. Stories written in a very vast canvas. E.g. one value given in the Vedas which will be highlighted in the form of a story and presented in thousands of verses – Harishchandra Purānam whose essence is Satyam Vada – speak the truth. Abstract things are concretised. Audio things are made audio visual. And many of the abstract ideas are symbolised in the form of beings. In Bhāgavata Purānam, Kāma, Krodha, Ahankāra become Rākshasa – personification of ideas. Language of symbolism is used. Hence concretisation, symbolisation, personification and magnification are all done in the Purāna so that the impact of the teaching is intense. Similarly respect for father – Pitru Devo Bhava is elaborated as the story of Rāma or Nachiketa.

Thus we have in the form of stories or elaboration the Vedic teachings clarified, classified and magnified. And most of the Purāna have been written by Vyāsāchārya himself and that is why he is greatly revered by us. Eighteen Purāna running to thousands of verses and eighteen Upa-Purāna running to another thousands of verses. The most popular is Bhāgavata Purānam or Bhāgavatam

2.5. Itihāsa – Semi-historical literature (Epics)

The next layer of literature is Itihāsa. It means history based literature. The contents of Itihāsa is supposed to be based on what really happened. Derived from Iti – Thus, in this way, Evam; Ha – definitely, doubtlessly; Āsa – it occurred, happened, took place. Even in the Purāna stories, many are supposed to be actual events and the Itihāsa is also supposed to be based on actual events. The Itihāsa are also in the form of poems. Many Pauranikās know them and study by heart. The two main Itihāsa are Rāmāyanam (24,000 verses)– written originally by Vālmīki , and the other Mahābhāratha (1 lakh verses) written by Vyāsāchārya.

Rāmāyana is the life led by Rāma. Rāma is presented as a model of Vedic way of living. Rāmasya Ayanam Mārgaha Jīvita Rītihi. Because models have powerful impact, hence when some teaching is to be given it is given through models.

Mahābhāratha means the story of Bharata Vamsha Rājā. Mahā indicating a vast literature dealing with stories of Bharata Vamsha and through the stories, the Vedic teachings are presented. Here, even though the literature is based on history this should not be taken as pure history. Presenting history is not the primary purpose of the literature. If it were the purpose, all the details should be given exactly. History is taken as a support, the primary purpose is Vedic teaching and therefore history is mixed with fiction also.

Some are facts and some are fiction. E.g. Did Rāvanā have ten heads ? The ten heads are representative of multiple personality syndrome – ruler, Rākshasa, arrogance etc. Hence sometimes, fictitious characters are introduced, sometimes symbolic language is introduced.

2.6. Bhāshyam – Exegetical literature

The sixth and final layer of literature is Bhāshyam literature. This refers to commentaries written in Sanskrit on all the above forms of literature. There are commentaries on Vedas, Sūtrāni, Itihāsa. We also have sub-commentaries and sub-sub- commentaries.

Commentaries are required because our scriptural literature has to be unlocked in an appropriate manner. If you do not know how to extract the teaching, you will have problems with the scriptural literature – develop negative opinion, have misunderstandings. There is a key to unlock this – called Sampradāyaha - the method of opening, unlocking. Hence we generally don't recommend the translations written on the literature, especially by the western people or western educated Indians, because by simply going to a Sanskrit dictionary, the true meaning cannot be obtained. There is a special methodology called Sampradāya. Using this Sampradāya, our traditional Āchāryas have written Bhāshya Granthās and Vyākhyāna Granthās. These commentaries are in forms of prose or verse.

Thus all these six layers put together are called Shāstram and the entire Shāstram is meant for only one purpose – helping us in the accomplishment of Purushārtha.

Wednesday, 26 March 2008

3. Varna Dharma – Social Scheme

– A unique design for peace and prosperity

In this session, we will discuss the important topic of Varna Āshrama Vyavasthā. Varna Āshrama Vyavasthā can be translated as Varna Āshrama scheme. We saw in the last session how the main aim of the scriptures is to help the human being in accomplishing the fourfold human goals. The scriptures are willing to help those people who are willing to take the assistance of the scriptures. There is no enforcement. Whoever has got faith in the scriptures, whoever is humble enough to take assistance from the scriptures, the scriptures provide valuable help for the humanity in accomplishing the fourfold goals or Preyas and Shreyas.

For accomplishing these fourfold goals, the scriptures provide a particular infrastructure. A country's progress needs a proper infrastructure like roads and communication. Vedas or the scriptures also understand the role and importance of the infrastructure and the infrastructure presented by the Vedas is called Varna Āshrama Vyavasthā. According to the scriptures this scheme is the ideal scheme in which the society can or the human beings can accomplish all the four Purushārtha. It must be remembered that when Vedas

provide a scheme, they keep in mind the spiritual and material goals of life. The western society specialises in providing the infrastructure only for material success – making money and providing entertainment. An infrastructure which suits only the material success is not enough for the accomplishment of spiritual goals. Hence the scriptural infrastructure keeps in mind both the material and spiritual goals of humanity. This is because, according to the scriptures, mere material success is absolutely worthless. This is what Arjuna discovered on the battle field. Even though he was materially rich and accomplished person, his spiritual bankruptcy came into the fore when he faced a crisis in life. And therefore the scriptures say the material success is extremely important but it should be equally balanced by spiritual success also and ultimately what matters is spiritual success. A truly successful person is one who has discovered his real spiritual nature.

And the infrastructure or the social design or scheme given by the scriptures is called Varna Āshrama Vyavasthā. It consists of two schemes, Varna Vyavasthā and Āshrama Vyavasthā. We will first take up the Varna Scheme for our study and then the Āshrama Scheme.

3.1. Varna Vyavasthā – Sociological scheme

Varna Vyavasthā is a social scheme which is meant for the upliftment of, the growth of, the prosperity of the society as a whole. Varna Vyavasthā is a sociological scheme. It is a Macro scheme taking a society into account whereas Āshrama Vyavasthā is a scheme in which the individual growth and success are kept in mind. The society must also be taken into account as a whole and the individual must also be taken into account because individuals put together alone form the society. Therefore a balance has to be struck between the individual and the society. Hence Varna Vyavasthā is a social scheme.

In the Varna Vyavasthā the whole humanity or society is classified into four groups or four classes. Each group is called a Varnaha. And the society is divided into four such groups which we called Varna Vibhāgaha. Varna Vyavasthā is a scheme in which the society is broadly classified into four groups known as Varna Vibhāgaha. And each group serves as an organ of the society if the society is taken as one body. Thus the society is seen as an organic whole having this fourfold organs. Those four Varnāhā:

- Brāhmana Varnaha
- Kshatriyaha Varnaha
- Vaishya Varnaha
- Shūdra Varnaha

Varnaha can be translated as 'groups' for the time being.

What is the basis on which this division is made ? Any distinction can be made based on any characteristic or condition. Thus whenever you talk of classification you should ask what is the basis of classification so that I can determine into which group I belong to. And when we look at the basis of classification, we can see that there are three different bases

or conditions on which the society can be classified. The groups will change and my status will change based on the norm of classification.

3.1.1. Guna Vibhāgaha – Classification based personality trait

The first norm on which the society can be classified is character or personality or inclination or trait. In Sanskrit we call it Guna Vibhāgaha – Guna based division of society. And when you make such a division we talk about four types of personalities and based on the type of personality, the person will be called:

- Guna Brāhmana or
- Guna Kashatriya or
- Guna Vaishya or
- Guna Shūdra

The above classification is purely based on personality.

The next question is what makes me a Guna Brahmana ? What personality trait makes me a Guna Brahmana or Guna Kshatriyaha or Guna Vaishya or Guna Shūdra ?

The four traits given in the scriptures are as follows:

- Spiritual Personality
- Dynamic Personality
- Selfishly Motivated Personality
- Lethargic Personality

3.1.1.1. Spiritual Personality

A personality in which one gravitates towards spirituality primarily. One who loves spiritual pursuits, withdrawal, solitude, silence, contemplation, pursuits of the ultimate reality. That alone appeals to that mind. While all the other things in life which the other people consider as very important, for this personality they appear insignificant or even silly. Such a spiritually oriented, contemplative, silent, solitude enquiry loving personality or trait is called Guna Brāhmanatvam and such a person is called Guna Brāhmanaha. Sanyāsa appeals to such a mind. Renunciation appeals to such a mind. While for other people, solitude appears as terrible loneliness, a dreadful depressing loneliness, this mind loves solitude. This is called a spiritual personality and whoever enjoys this trait is called Guna Brāhmanaha. In the Shāstrams, the technical word used is Sattva Pradhāna personality.

3.1.1.2. Dynamic Personality

This personality heavily loves activity. Outgoing, active, planning, energetic, dynamic, highly motivated mind are the traits. And this motivation is itself selfless motivation. Interested in activity but not in self-centred activity, not selfish dynamism but interested in contribution, serving, uplifting, helping the society. Such a selflessly motivated mind is

called Guna Kshatriya mind – a personality which heavily contributes to the material progress of the society. So we will call it Guna Kshatriya – selflessly motivated mind. In the Shāstrams, the technical word used is Shuddha Rajaha Pradhāna personality. It is active and the activity with noble motives.

3.1.1.3. Selfishly Motivated Personality

This personality is also equally dynamic as the Kshatriya personality. Both cannot think of solitude, withdrawal or Sanyasi and may get angry with Sanyasi. So this type is highly dynamic and motivated, cannot think of silence, renunciation, contemplation but this personality is different from the previous one. This personality is highly self centred – selfishly motivated personality. So every activity has to produce a benefit for oneself and one's family. This personality would like to amass wealth, and will not think of contributing to the society. So this mind is Guna Vaishya mind. Can be translated as selfishly motivated and dynamic mind. In the Shāstrams, the technical word used is Ashuddha Rajaha Pradhāna personality. It is Rajaha Pradhāna personality, dynamic and active, enthusiastic and motivated, but the Ashuddhi is totally selfishness.

3.1.1.4. Lethargic Personality

This personality is called Guna Shūdra and is passive and lethargic. It has no motivation at all either for material or spiritual success. No Purushārtha appeals to this personality. The mere goals of life is to eat and survive and die. This is a mind which is very close to animalistic mind. A lethargic, passive, motivation-less personality is the fourth type of personality called Guna Shūdra Personality. In the Shāstrams, the technical word used is Tamas Pradhāna personality.

The above are four norms based on which Guna Vibhāgaha or Gunataha Varna Vibhāgaha is done. And we have to decide whether we are Guna Brāhmana or Guna Kshatriyaha or Guna Vaishya or Guna Shūdra. We need not declare it outside, but we can know where we stand.

3.1.2. Karma Vibhāgaha – Classification based on profession

The next norm of classification is Karma Vibhāgaha of the four Varnas - the fourfold Varnas based on work or profession or contribution done to the society. And all the possible professions are broadly classified into four types of works. These are not watertight and may involve overlap. Each work is important to the growth of the society.

3.1.2.1. Karma Brāhmanaha – Scriptural study and teaching

The most important one which is being neglected nowadays is scriptural learning and teaching. Scriptural teaching primarily is a very important work, which requires specialisation and dedicated pursuit. We saw earlier, our scriptures are too big. Our scriptures are both extensive and intensive. By extensive, we mean it deals with a range of topics – philosophy, ritual, astrology, ethics, grammar etc. The scriptures are also intensive

– they have commentaries and sub commentaries. And all this takes a lot of effort. So unless somebody is there to dedicate their lives to learn and teach, you cannot maintain and preserve. One important job to be done is studying the scriptures in their originals. Translations are often terrible. Not only we have to study the scriptures, to maintain the scriptures it has to be taught to the next generation equally extensively and intensively.

Can every lay person go to the total study of scriptures? To complete the 700 verses of the Gītā, it takes 6-7 years and people find it difficult. Therefore the whole society cannot dedicate itself to the study of scriptures. Therefore we require a separate group which specialises only on that. They should not have any other job, their only job should be studying all the scriptures and teach the next generation and society in a simplified manner in a contemporary language and interpreting in a way suitable for the present society. E.g. One cannot teach everything in the Brahma Sūtra to the public. One cannot, need not and whole society does not require that. Whatever is required by the society that much knowledge somebody must give. This is like the medical or legal profession. We can have a basic understanding of our health. We need not study the whole medical science, but we require some medical people who have dedicated their life for the medical science and who enlighten the society with regards to the basic laws of health or law. Therefore the entire humanity cannot study the whole scriptures and therefore we require a whole group people who have dedicated their life for the study of scriptures and memorising and chant these. Even chanting of the scriptures is good for the society. The Vedic vibration, is supposed to give help to the society. Therefore a group dedicated to Veda Adhyayanam, Veda Adhyāpanam, Veda Pārāyanam, Veda Pāthanam and Vedic interpretation. Vedic interpretation is important because, what is said hundred years ago, may not be relevant now. So when new situations come, a scripture has to be flexibly interpreted to suit the modern society. And if proper interpretation is to be done, that person should have a holistic vision, a total vision and therefore it is a separate work that requires life-long dedication which is called scriptural teaching. They are the scriptural teachers of the society or consultants and they may have to serve as psychiatrists to the society. This is because scriptures deal with psychological problems also. That work is called Brahmana Karma or whoever takes up that job is called Karma Brahmanaha whose life is confined to scriptures.

3.1.2.2. Karma Kshatriyaha – Public service and administration

The second type of profession which is valued now is all forms of public service, administration of the country, governing the society, maintenance of law and order, policing the society, defending the country, army – all these things will come under those activities which are meant for providing the peaceful and appropriate atmosphere for the citizens to pursue their goals. Otherwise there will be no harmony all over. If the individual should pursue his goal, the atmosphere of the society must be maintained. In the olden days, it was the duty of the king, nowadays it is the role of ministers and administrators. And whoever has taken to that profession or Karma is called Karma Kshatriyaha.

3.1.2.3. Karma Vaishya – Commerce

This refers to all forms of commercial activities, business and trade. This is important for the equal distribution and sharing of the wealth of the requirement of the society. This includes all forms of commercial activities. This karma is called Vaishya Karma and whoever takes to this activity is called Karma Vaishyaha.

3.1.2.4. Karma Shūdraha – Labour

In the fourth and final part comes all forms of labour. Unskilled or semi-skilled labour where a person cannot think and there is no leadership but does the activities for some other person. No independent thinking exists but service to other three groups of people is only there i.e. following the leadership of Karma Brahmana, Karma Kshatriya or Karma Vaishya. And whoever takes to such an activity is called Karma Shūdraha.

Therefore, I can be based on my profession, any one of the above. This is the second division called Karma Vibhāgaha and this also comes under Varna Vyavasthā.

3.1.3. Jāti Vibhāgaha – Classification based on birth

The third division is purely based on the norm of birth, Janma or the family into which one is born. In Sanskrit, birth is called Jātihi. Derived from Jan – to be born. And based on the birth, one can be a Jāti Brāhmanaha if born into a Brahmana family, a Jāti Kshatriya if born into a Kshatriya family, a Jāti Vaishya if born into a Vaishya family or a Jāti Shūdra if born into a Shūdra family.

From three different norms the society can be classified. E.g. a person can be a Jāti Brāhmanaha and if he becomes an MP or MLA he becomes a Karma Kshatriya and suppose if he exploits the position to amass wealth then he becomes a Guna Vaishyaha. Thus one person himself, can be in these three Varnāhā. It depends on the norm that you base. This is the first topic of classification of the Varnas.

3.2. Which is the best ?

Next we will discuss the gradation. Do we have any gradation in the Varnas ? Is any Varna superior or inferior to the other ? In Sanskrit this is called Tāra Tamyam. Now we say, that as far as Jāti Vibhāgaha is concerned i.e. birth wise division is concerned, all the four are equal by birth. Birth cannot give superiority to anyone or inferiority to anyone. Jātitaha Sarve Api Samāhā Eva. Therefore nobody should claim superiority from the standpoint of Jāti. Caste system is the problem caused by the Tāra Tamyam attributed to Jāti Vibhāgaha. In Jāti Vibhāgaha there is no superiority.

Then what about profession ? Karma Vibhāgaha wise, is anybody superior ? Karma Vibhāgaha wise also, all are equal. No profession is inferior or superior, all jobs are equally important. And it is from this angle, the well known Purusha Sūktam mantra occurs,

*Brahmanosya Mukham Āsīt,
Bahurajanya kritaha*

*Ūrutadasya Yad Vaishyaha
Padbhyagum Shudro Ajāyata*

The above is for Karma Vibhāgaha only. Just as four organs have four different functions, the four Varnas have four different functions. The above mantra means :

Brāhmanaha : Teaching professional scriptural teaching.

Kshatriya : Maintenance of Law and Order

Vaishya : Taking care of the economic strength of the society, support system

Shūdra : All forms of labour, more of running around and less of head usage

And by saying that all these four are the four parts of the Lord, we say that all of them are equally sacred. You cannot say that the feet are less sacred than the Mukham. In fact we worship the feet of the Lord. Shankarāchārya is called Bhagavadpādaha and not Bhagavadshiraha. We talk about Pāda Pūja and not Ūru Pūja or Hasta Pūja. Therefore profession wise, there is no Tāra Tamyam. So Jāti Tāra Tamyam Nāsti, Karma Tāra Tamyam Nāsti.

Whereas in Guna Vibhāgaha, there is a gradation. A Guna Brāhmana is certainly superior to a Guna Kshatriya is certainly superior to Guna Vaishya is certainly superior to Guna Shūdra. Because Guna Shūdra is closer to animals and Guna Brahmana is closer to God. And therefore character wise superiority we have to accomplish and whoever has got the higher character deserves Namaskāram . Even though Prahalāda is a born Rākshasa, he can become the most reverential person in our culture. Prahlāda, Nārada, Parāshara – early morning, we are supposed to remember Prahlāda even before Nārada. Therefore birth does not matter, character alone matters.

Therefore there is no gradation in Jāti and Karma Vibhāgaha but gradation is to be recognised in Guna Vibhāgaha.

3.3. Is there a choice ?

The next topic is Choice. Do we have a choice in determining our group ?

3.3.1. Jāti Vibhāgaha – Choice of birth?

As far as Jāti [birth] s concerned, we don't have choice with regards to this birth, because we are already born. But the scriptures say, we do have a choice with regards to the next birth.

Shuchīnām Srīmatām Gehe Yogabhrashto Abhijāyate. — Bhagavad Gītā 6.41

This birth we have already chosen, the next we can choose by our lifestyle. Therefore this only a partial choice.

3.3.2. Karma Vibhāgaha – Choice of profession?

As far as profession is concerned, Karma Vibhāgaha, we do have a choice. And we can choose our profession from any angle. I can choose my profession based on my:

- Svabhāva or character – character or trait based choice of profession.

Or I can base it on

- Heredity – birth based or family profession.

Or the choice is

- Money based – where there is income.

Our scriptures based on ideal is character based choice. Because you will love your profession and it will not be a burden. Even salary will not matter then because you will love the very work itself. In fact Karma Yoga can be ideally practiced if you love what you do because the very performance gives you satisfaction.

Character based profession is ideal, but if you are not sure about character, then the next best is family based or hereditary profession. There will be no competition or over crowding of certain fields and then some fields will not be neglected. Thus all professions will be protected and there will be no competition.

The worst and negative approach is money based choice of profession. This is the most terrible one because, when money becomes important, corruption will be inevitable in a society where money is God. Hence either go by character or by family. An in fact to a great extent our society was heredity based. Now alone it is gradually changed.

3.3.3. Guna Vibhāgaha – Choice of character improvement?

With regards to Guna also, we do have a choice. And all the spiritual Sādhanāni Sādhanā are to improve our Gunāhā to Guna Brāhmanatvam. We all should become Guna Brāhmana ultimately, whatever be our birth or profession. Therefore there is choice in this also. Also note, only because there is choice, it is called Varnaha. Vriyate Iti Varnaha. You can choose your (next) Janma, profession or character, but the choice of character is ultimately important.

Sunday, 30 March 2008

4. Ashrama Vyavasthā – Individual scheme

– The individual scheme in which the life is divided into four stages:

The Student stage

The Family stage

The Hermit stage

The Sanyāsa stage

– The Student stage

In this stage, education is the focus. Knowing the importance of both material and spiritual goal.

– The Family stage

Emphasis is pursuit of Artha and Kāma – material goal oriented.

– The Hermit stage

Transition stage where I prepare for Spiritual goal and gradually withdraw from material pursuit and prepare for spiritual pursuit

– The Sanyāsa Stage

When I am dedicated to Spiritual pursuit.

These four stages have to be gone through by everyone, in fact all the spiritual Sādhanāni are only these four stages.

In the last class, we saw about Varna Āshrama Vyavasthā or Varna Āshrama Scheme which is prescribed by our scriptures for the accomplishment of the human goals otherwise called Purushārtha. And we saw that this Varna Āshrama scheme consists of two schemes – one being Varna Vyavasthā or the Varna Scheme and the other being Āshrama Vyavasthā or Āshrama scheme. Of these two we dealt with Varna scheme elaborately. Therefore we will now see Āshrama Vyavasthā scheme as designed by the Shāstram and more important and relevant than the Varna Vyavasthā.

Āshrama is generally translated as a stage in life and the entire life of a Vaidika is divided into four stages otherwise called four Āshrama - Chatvāraha Āshramāhā. These four stages are

Brahmachari Āshrama – a stage of a student life

Grihastha Āshrama – a stage of a householder's life

Vānaprastha Āshrama – a stage of a hermit's life

Sanyāsa Āshrama – a stage of a monk's life of renunciation.

The above are the four Āshramas mentioned in our Shāstrams. What is the meaning of the word Āshrama? Derivatively seen, the word Shramaha means effort, a deliberate wilful well directed effort. Here the effort is a spiritual Sādhanā. Therefore Shramaha means spiritual Sādhanā or Sādhanā Anushtāna. And Āshramaha refers to a stage of life in which a person practices spiritual Sādhanāni.

Ā Samantāt Shramaha Ādhyātmika Sādhanā Anushtānanam Yasmin Saha - a state in which a person is committed to spiritual Sādhanā. And since the entire life is divided into four Āshramas, according to our scriptures, the entire life is a spiritual journey. Āshrama is not only in the later part of life, it is not a post-retirement exercise, the entire life is a series of spiritual Sādhanāni only. The only difference, in each stage the type of spiritual Sādhanā differs. And that is why according to our scriptures the primary and ultimate goal of a human being is spiritual goal only.

Even though we temporarily accept Dharma Artha and Kāma as human goals, but in the heart of hearts the scriptures do not accept them as real goals. They are apparent goals and appear as goals as long as a person is immature. And accepting the viewpoint of an immature person. The scriptures talk about the other three goals, but really speaking there is only one goal that is spiritual. And therefore the scriptures design an entire lifestyle full

of spiritual Sādhanā for the realisation accomplishment of the spiritual goal called Moksha. Until he becomes mature, he will practice spiritual Sādhanā without knowing that it is spiritual Sādhanā. Veda prescribe the Sādhanā which are like sugar coated pills so a child consumes the medicine as though it is a sweet but inside hidden is the medicine. Similarly the scriptures prescribe exercises which are seemingly meant for Dharma-Artha-Kāma but the hidden intent is that they will also unknowingly in a hidden manner. Our scriptures also have a hidden agenda. The superficial agenda is Sādhanā for Dharma-Artha-Kāma but the hidden agenda is Sādhanā for Moksha. Since in all the four stages, exercises are prescribed for spiritual goals, all the four stages are Āshrama only. And the spiritual goal is nothing but a freedom struggle, a struggle for internal freedom. But the life is a freedom struggle meant for spiritual freedom otherwise called Moksha.

These four stages are very interesting, because it is very close to the stages which are undergone by certain insects like butterflies. If you study the life stages of a butterfly talked about by an entomologist, they also go through four stages. First is the egg stage, then from the egg, they come out as worms called caterpillar voraciously eating leaves and after a burst of activities again they withdraw into a stage of pupa. Similar to the egg stage, the pupa stage also has no activity and it is withdrawal. And from the pupa stage they come out as a full fledged butterfly free to fly. In the butterfly stage alone it is the most attractive one. Now we will see what are these four Āshramas.

4.1. Brahmachari Āshrama – Student stage

The first Āshrama is Brahmachari Āshrama or student's life or the life of education. The question is what is the purpose and content of education ? Nowadays when we talk about education, we only mean learning certain professional skills meant for earning. Learning for earning. Only money or earning or entertainment or Artha-Kāma alone are kept in mind when we talk about education nowadays – which particular profession will give maximum salary and if possible minimum work. This is not the approach of our scriptures. Our scriptures accept that there should be learning of professional skills. It is required because we have to earn our livelihood. I should become either Karma Brāhmanaha or Karma Kshatriyaha or Karma Vaishyaha or Karma Shūdra. For the appropriate profession, I should get the knowledge and skills and this education is understood and scriptures accept this.

But according to our scriptures this is only one aspect of education and in fact it is a secondary aspect only that has unfortunately become primary only now. According to our scriptures the primary purpose of education is refinement of a person, character building of a person, transformation of the person so that he will harmoniously fit into the society contributing to both the social and individual growth. If an unrefined corrupt person, a valueless person enters the society there will be only disharmony and problems in the society. And this refinement alone makes an animalistic man governed by instincts will be converted into a humane man , a Man man who is governed by proper ways of living. Swāmi Chinmayānanda beautifully uses the expression, the animal man should be reborn

as Man-man. A wild human being should become a tamed or cultured human being and only then a Man man can be converted into a God man.

You would have heard about metals dug out from the earth and when the crude metals are dug from mines they are in crude ore form. This is a crude form that cannot be used by anyone. No doubt they have been extracted out of the earth, no doubt the metal is born, but the metal is only potentially useful and not yet useful. If the metal has to be made useful, it has to go to factory and undergo a set of processes of refinement and the ore should be converted into a refined metal and that alone can be brought for public use. Similarly when we are born out of our mother, our first birth is unrefined crude only potentially useful form. And we should not enter the society without going through a second process called Gurukulavāsā or education system in which I have to get refined. And that is why we say, we all should have two Janmāhā and we should all become Dvijaha. Prākṛita Janāhā to Samkṛita Janāhā – crude human being to cultured human being, this conversion is the job of education.

And that is why in many Smritis, two sets of parents are talked about. The biological parents give birth to the crude human being.

*Matur Agre Adhijananam Dvītyam Mounji Bandhanāt,
Tatrāsya Mātā Gāyatri Pitā Tu Āchārya Uchyate.*

The first set of parents is the biological parents through whom I am born in an unrefined form. Then I go to my Āchārya or Guru who uses Gāyatri Devi. Gāyatri Devi represents Vidyā or education or Shāstram Jnānam. And this Āchārya is the father and Gāyatri or Sarasvati is the mother. Guru as the father and education as the mother will convert me into a useful refined mature human being.

Therefore education must include scriptural education also according to our scriptures and that is why the very student stage is called Brahmachāri Āshrama. Brahma here means the scriptures or the Vedas. And Chāri is the one who dwells upon. Brahmani Vede Charati. Charati means walks, travels mentally through the Vedic teaching which is nothing but scriptural education. Going through that is Brahmachari Āshrama.

The next question is what type of education should I have for the refinement of the personality. What type of education do the scriptures give to refine me ? Three things are very important.

4.1.1. Understand the Goal

The first thing is I should very clearly know what is the ultimate goal that I am working for. Imagine in a football match, all the eleven people know how to dribble the ball and keep the ball with their team without giving it to the other team. And when they don't strike any goal, there is no use at all. Remember that I should know, dribbling the ball is not an end in itself, after one and half hours I will be tired but I wont be successful. I should know through the struggles that even though the footballer is handling the ball, he remembers that he has to strike a goal. The whole life is a football match. We are handling so many

things like money, family, office etc but the question is what for is all this ? I should be clearly taught and told that the goal is Moksha or I have to convert myself from animal man to Man-man to God Man. This is the purpose and if I don't accomplish this, I have played football very well, but the result is nothing.

*Yaha Ātmānam Aviditvā Asmān Lokāt Prayiti, Saha Kripanaha
Yaha Aksharam Veditvā Prayiti, Saha Eva Brāhmanaha.
(Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad)*

Therefore the student must know that the spiritual goal is the ultimate goal

4.1.2. Knowledge of Rituals

The second thing that has to be there is the knowledge of some form of religious worship which is generally known as rituals. This also should be known and understood because many people do not understand the role and importance of worship and rituals. Physical-ised worship is being referred to here. Because rituals or worship are one of the best methods to develop discipline. Wherever rituals are there, religious or material rituals, discipline is bound to come. And wherever discipline is involved, rituals will automatically come. E.g. The army is the most disciplined part of the country and they have the maximum rituals. Greeting, walking, functions in their group and even standing is ritualistic. Discipline and rituals always go together and therefore one requires some form of ritual to develop discipline.

The second purpose is developing dynamism in life. Because laziness is the most natural thing to the physical body.

Ālasyam Hi Manushyānām Sharīrastho Mahān Ripuhu.

Laziness is inborn in the body. Unless we have some physical routine in life the laziness will not go away. Tamo Guna Nivrittārtham. One requires rituals or physicalised routines. The third purpose is to develop devotion to Lord. Devotion to Lord can be developed only by physicalised expression. Devotion is an inner mental feeling like any other emotion. Emotion is invisible. Any emotion has to be expressed and this is by verbalisation or physicalisation or both. The body has its own language of communicating with either positive or negative emotions. This expression not only reveals my emotion, this expression will nourish my emotion also. Thus the expression is not only the effect of my emotion, but the expression can nourish the emotion. Therefore every expression is a cause and a consequence of an emotion. Therefore when I do Pūja, I am expressing my devotion and also nourishing my devotion. Therefore our relationship with the Lord is kept alive and is nourished throughout our life. Ultimately the scriptures are going to teach us that the only permanent relation is the relation with God. All the other human relation, however much carefully you nourish will end someday or the other. If at all there is one permanent relation, that is with God. Therefore that relationship of reverence and devotion, must be kept alive and must be nourished and therefore also physicalised (Pūja) and verbalised (Stotram) worship.

4.1.3. Values of Life

So education must teach me what is the goal, importance of worship and the important values of life. Values of life are the eternal constants of creation that can never be changed.

Dharma is unchanging. It is Shāshvatam Dharma or Sanātana Dharma and are eternal values. I should understand them and I should assimilate them. I should know that I cannot compromise them without damaging my physical, emotional and intellectual health. This has to be understood.

Hence in education, I should know the Goals of life, learn the value of physicalised worship and the Values of life. Once I go through these three stages, I am a refined human being and not a threat to the society.

4.2. Grihastha Āshrama – Family stage

The Second Āshrama is Grihastha Āshrama . The first two are very important. Grihastha Āshrama or Family life is the next Āshrama which is extremely relevant and important and alive even now. According to scriptures, family life is a religious institution sanctified through a religious process or ceremony meant for a religious life primarily. Family life is a religious institution formed by a religious ceremony and meant for religious purpose only.

Materialistic purposes are incidental by-products only. This is our approach to family life. If we think that materialistic goals like security and pleasure or comfort are the primary purposes, then such a family life will become either unstable or it will soon become irrelevant. And that is why the religious emphasis is getting diluted now and the families are becoming unstable. In many other societies, the very relevance of family life as an institution is being questioned. Because when you look at the family from a materialistic angle, you will get a totally different picture. There are these people called Women's Liberation who say women have been traditionally economically dependant and not empowered to fulfil her aspiration. And they say that women must be economically independent and empowered and now women are also independent. Then comes the question as to why they need to live together : this is because nobody is dependant on anybody else, no body needs the other one and therefore the very purpose of living together is questioned. Even if we say we stay together because we like each other, unfortunately human likes and dislikes constantly change. And especially in a consumerist society, the philosophy is – do not keep anything for long. Since we are prodded to change, we want to cater to our fickle, entertaining mind the question come – how long can a person love the materialistic things around. Therefore separation begins at the family level. There is no religious cohesiveness – a family that prays together stays together. As long as materialistic purposes are kept in mind, the family will become unstable.

Hence religion is the primary purpose of Grihastha Āshrama. Grihasthaha is derived

from Grihe Tishthati – hooked to the house. And once that attitude comes, the family bond is looked as a sacred bond caused by God himself. The bond is a sacred bond determined by God's will and therefore God alone has the right to dismantle the bond. Only in such an attitude the family will be stable. And then only in a stable family, a person can develop important virtues like tolerance.

Therefore such forcible situations are required for transformation : Titikshā, tolerance, accommodation, forgiveness, trust etc are important virtues that can be developed only in a stable family. Finally, a stable family is required for raising emotionally healthy children. This has been found that when the family is unstable, there is a disharmony and the children sense the disharmony. Therefore Grihastha is extremely important for myself and the next generation.

4.3. Vānaprastha and Sanyāsa Āshramas – Hermit and renunciate stages

Vānaprastha Āshrama is a training for gradual withdrawal. Because, if we study our physical body itself, it peaks into activity and as we grow older, the physical body cannot get involved in extroverted activities. The physical body withdraws and if there should be no strain, the mind should learn to gradually withdraw. Otherwise there will be a strain in the personality – the mind is highly active and the physical body is not able to implement. All the faculties are either slow or doubtful. Therefore the mind should also learn to withdraw, learn to enjoy seclusion – Antarmukhatvam learning introversion. This is a training period of self-knowledge, turning towards the self where I should feel that I have learnt enough of the world and let me now cap the life with the knowledge of myself.

So Vānaprastha stage is a stage of withdrawal, introversion or seclusion. A retiring person has to prepare for the retirement, learning to accept the way of life and not developing any complex. Let the Vānaprastha be the preparation for the Sanyāsa Āshrama which is the next education. Sanyāsa Āshrama is again spiritual education. Brahmachārya Āshrama is value education – Dharma Jnānam. Sanyāsa Āshrama is with an introvert mind, living in seclusion.

Vānaprasthaha means the one who lives in seclusion even within the family.

Vānanām Samūhaha Vānam

Vāne Prakarshen Tishtathi Iti Vānaprasthaha.

Sanyāsaha literally means giving up everything, renunciation of everything, primarily renunciation of one's ignorance and ego by which one is mentally prepared to lose anything in life. Yama Dharma Rāja is going to take everything including our body and before Yama Dharma Rāja comes, one should be prepared to hand over everything in a platter. So this is Sanyāsa Āshrama whether a person physically goes through all these stages or not one should mentally go through all these stages.

And Sanyāsa in a ritualistic form is called Āshrama Sanyāsa in which he physically renounces everything. But whether one physically renounces everything or not, one should surely mentally develop detachment from everything so that he is ready for self-

knowledge.

These are the four Āshramas every human being following the religious scriptural tradition should go through.

Monday, 31 March 2008

5. Karma Yoga - Right action and right attitude

5.1. Right Action

In the previous four sessions, we saw the Purushārtha, the human goals of life. We also saw about the scriptures which want to help us in the fulfilment of these human goals. Then we saw the scriptural infrastructure, the Varna Āshrama scheme which is the infrastructure presented by the scriptures for the pursuit of these fourfold human goals.

Now in the following sessions, we propose to see the course of discipline prescribed by the scriptures for accomplishing these goals. What we previously saw was the infrastructure or the atmosphere. The very social and family condition was presented before. Now, we are going to see the course of discipline prescribed by the scriptures for the realisation and accomplishment of the human goals. These human goals, include all the four goals – material accomplishments (Dharma-Artha-Kāma) as well as spiritual accomplishment (Moksha). According to the scriptures, all the human accomplishments should culminate in spiritual accomplishment of Moksha. Without Moksha, the human life is incomplete. And therefore the scriptures keep the material accomplishments as incidental goals and the spiritual accomplishment as the ultimate and primary goal of life. In fact that alone gives the sense of fulfilment at the time of death. Minus Moksha the total sense of fulfilment cannot come – there will be wants and regrets.

Therefore keeping all the goals and especially the spiritual goal of Moksha in mind the scriptures prescribe a course of discipline which we generally call Sādhanā. Sādhanā means a course of discipline that we undertake to accomplish a goal – the goal is called Sādhyam. To accomplish the Sādhyam, the goal, we take to a course of discipline called Sādhanā and when we take to this discipline we are called Sādhaka. Therefore the scriptures want us to become Sādhakas taking to Sādhanā for accomplishing the Sādhyam. And once we accomplish the Sādhyam, we will be become Siddhāhā. So, Sādhaka through Sādhanā should attain Sādhyam and thus become Siddha. Sādhaka to Siddha is the journey of life.

Siddha is not related to miraculous powers. Siddha is one who is totally at home with himself. And this entire course of Sādhanā is broadly classified or divided into three levels or segments for the convenience of understanding and practice. Each level being called a Yogaha. The very word Yoga meant that which links the Sādhaka and the Sādhyam – the seeker and the sought. Yoga is derived from the root Yuj – to combine or unite. Unite the Sādhaka and Sādhyam. Yujyate Sādhyena Saha Sādhakaha Yena Saha Sādhanā.

What are these three levels of Sādhanāni or Yogas. These are:

- Karma Yoga
- Upāsana Yoga
- Jnāna Yogaha

Therefore you can visualise the entire course of discipline as a staircase with three steps. Three-stepped staircase through which you can climb and reach Moksha. We will study each one of the Yogas. Because these three Yogas are not presented as alternative methods. This should be very clear to a Sādhaka that these three Yogas are not presented as alternative or optional methods. According to scriptures all three are important and compulsory and necessary for all the people. Just as when you climb the staircase, you have to step on every step – you cannot skip any one step if you want to safely and comfortably reach the goal.

Therefore we have to necessarily know all the three Yogas and we have to necessarily resort to all the three Yogas. We will now deal with one Yoga at a time, starting with Karma Yoga.

Karma Yoga consists of two words. It is a compound word consisting of two words – Karma and Yogaha. The word Karma in this context refers to proper action or appropriate action. The word Yoga means proper attitude or appropriate attitude – in Sanskrit Bhāvanā. In simple language Karma Yoga is nothing but proper action with proper attitude. Now we have to understand what is meant by proper action.

All the human actions possible for us, are broadly classified into three types by the scriptures. This is based on their spiritual influence on the human beings. This is because, the scriptures consider the spiritual personality and the spiritual goal as the most important thing which we cannot ignore and therefore they categorise actions not based on their materialistic benefits and influence. But actions are categorised based on their spiritual influence on you. There are three categories

1. Uttamam Karma : those Karmas which have maximum positive spiritual influence
2. Madhyamam Karma : intermediary one, those Karmas which have got limited or nil spiritual influence. They might have a lot of materialistic benefits which are not kept in mind.
3. Adhama Karma : those actions which have got a negative spiritual contribution which means those which will cause spiritual fall or retrogression.

Now we will try and understand these.

5.1.1. Uttama Karmāni – Best actions

This is otherwise known as Sāttvika Karmāni. In the 17th and 18th chapters of Bhagavad Gītā, Krishna deals with these topics in detail. Uttama Karmāni or Sāttvika Karmāni are defined as Para Upakāra Karmāni – all those actions which will benefit

maximum number of beings, where you help or contribute towards other's wellbeing. The Para Upakāra Karmāni are greatly praised in our scriptures. There is a verse that says

*Shrūyatam Dharma Sarvasvam,
Shrutva Chaiva Avadhāryatām,
Paropakāra Punyāya
Pāpāya Parapīdanam*

All the noble Karmas or punya Karmas or elevating Karmas are Para Upakāra Karma – helping others.

*Para Upakārāya Vahanti Nadyaha
Para Upakārāya Duhanti Gāvaha
Para Upakārāya Phalanti Vrukshāhā
Para Upakārārtham Idam Sharīram*

In short, Uttama Karmas are those Karmas where you give more and take less. So the greater is your giving, the greater is your growing. Therefore our culture is a giving or Dānam or Tyāgam culture. Whereas a materialistic is a grabbing culture.

This Para Upakāra Karmās are otherwise called Nishkāma Karmāni. Thus all these words are synonymous – Uttama Karmāni, Sāttvika Karmāni, Para Upakāra Karmāni or Nishkāma Karmāni – they contribute to the maximum spiritual growth.

The next question is what are those Para Upakāra Karmāni ? And the scriptures help us in identifying these Para Upakāra Karmās and they are presented as Pancha Mahā Yajñāha – the fivefold Yajñāhā. In these five Yajñāhā, I will be contributing to the welfare of the world.

5.1.1.1. Deva Yajñaha – Remembrance of Divine

The first Yajñaha is called Deva Yajñaha. This is the first and foremost Para Upakāra Karma. And in this Deva Yajñaha – worship and prayer of God, what am I supposed to do ? I just stand in front of the Lord, and with my full and total heart utter a prayer. The prayer is the noblest one known in the scriptures –

*Svasti Prajābhya Paripālayantām,
Nyāyena Mārgena Mahīm Mahīshāhā
Go Bhrahmanebhya Shubhamastu Nityam
Lokāha Samastāha Sukhinaha Bhavantu*

May all of humankind be happy and well.

May the great noble lords protect the earth in every way by the path of just virtue.

May there be perpetual joy for those who know the real nature of things.

May all the worlds be happy and free.

A sincere heartfelt deep prayer is the most powerful contribution which will help not only the entire humanity, animals and plants but it goes beyond the terrestrial plane to 14

Lokāhā:

*Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinaha,
Sarve Santu Nirāmayāhā,
Sarve Bhadrani Pashyantū,
Mā Kaschid Dukhabhāg Bhavet.*

May everybody be happy,
May everybody be free from disease,
May everybody have good luck and
May none fall on evil days.

So when I utter these prayers in front of the Lord, in any language, I am doing the greatest contribution to the creation. In any other service, I can confine to only a particular geographical area. No human being or no institution can reach all areas of creation, but this one prayer is the most extensive prayer which will benefit the whole creation. So this is the most extensive and least expensive Para Upakāra Karma. The expenditure is a few minutes and few words and the sincerest heart. And along with this prayer if you offer something to the Lord, whatever you offer will also be distributed to the entire creation. Because God does not depend upon your contribution. God has a trust called Universal trust, Him being the trustee. Whatever is offered in any Pūja or Abhishekam, nothing will be wasted and everything offered will be taken by the Lord and distributed through the Universal Trust of God to every human being, every living being including plants and micro-organisms. Therefore the Sevā or service offered to the Lord, will ultimately go to humanity only.

Nowadays people say that Mānava Sevā is Mādhava Sevā. It is a good concept and is declared by many social-service people who sometimes look down upon the religion of people going to temples. They have the holier than thou, we are doing service, and that the others are doing useless Pūja. This is because they see only one side of the equation. They know Mānava Sevā is Mādhava Sevā but they don't understand the other side that Mādhava Sevā is in fact more extensive Mānava Sevā because when I worship or offer, it is reaching the entire humanity. Therefore Mādhava Sevā or Deva Yajna is the first and most extensive and least expensive Paropakāram . And this is to be done daily.

5.1.1.2. Pitru Yajna – Remembrance of ancestors

This is the second Yajna. In each one of them, there is an expression of gratitude.

Gratitude + Upakāra = Yajna. I express my gratitude to my Lord for what the Lord has given to me and then I contribute to the creation. In this Yajna, I express my gratitude to all my forefathers because of whom I am here. So my parents have contributed by giving birth to me, having brought me up without knowing whether I will do anything in return.

The greatest service is the parental service. And if my parents are able to do that, it is because of their parents and so on. In Pitru Yajna, I contribute to the well being of and

express my gratitude to all the ancestors.

Then you may ask, how can you call this Paropakāra? Because you are only bothering about your ancestors. In all the Pitru Karmas there is another contribution to a special 'fund'. This is required because there are many ancestors who do not get the Shrāddham because either they don't have children or they have children who do not believe in Shrāddham. And imagine the plight of all such ancestors. The scriptures understand that in Kaliyuga, more such non-believers will come and the values will come down and hence we have an offering.

*Eshām Na Mātā Na Pitā
Na Mitrajnāti Bāndhavāhā
Te Sarve Trupti Māyāntu
Mayā UtSrishtaihi Kushodakaihi*

There are orphans like ancestors who are not contributed to by anyone, ungrateful children are there. For all such ancestors, let my offering go. All the Pitru Yajna like Shrāddham or Tarpanam, are great Paropakāra Karma because ancestors are also a vast community.

5.1.1.3. Brahma Yajna – Remembrance of Rishis

The third Yajna is called Brahma Yajna. This is expressing my gratitude to all the Rishīs who have given the Vedas and other secondary scriptures. Brahma means Vedas here and Brahma Yajna means Veda Yajna in which I worship both the scriptures and the authors of the scriptures, the discoverers of the scriptures – the Rishīs. It is because of them alone, that I am enjoying this wonderful holistic culture.

And in what way am I going to help these Rishīs ? These Rishīs do not need any help from me as they are already free. They want to spread this teaching in the entire creation. This is their one intention. They have given out the wonderful scriptures and only want the preservation and propagation of this wonderful teaching. Whatever I do to preserve and propagate the scriptures is a very great service. This is because scriptures help the humanity. This is in two ways :-

Firstly, the very sound of the scriptures help the humanity in creating peace. That is why we value Pārāyanam as a great Sādhanā. When I chant the scriptures aloud, the very Shabda, the very Veda Ghosha (loud chanting), purifies the creation. Therefore Pārāyanam becomes Brahma Yajna.

Secondly learning and teaching of the scriptural content is beneficial. This propagation of the teaching is called Adhyāpanam . Scriptural teaching is considered to be the best form of Brahma Yajna.

*Adhyāpanam Brahma Yajna
Pitru Yajnastu Tarpanam
Homo Daivo Balirbhoutaha*

Nriyagnyo Tithipūjanam

These are the five definitions of Pancha Yajna. There is a very big difference between teaching and preaching. Preaching is giving a set of stray discourses on unconnected topics. It is some form of a Satsanga, where somebody shares some thoughts or advices or stories spending some time uttering nice words. This is certainly useful but there is big difference between such preaching and systematic teaching in the form of classes. In teaching there is a development, connection between every topic and all the ideas are supported through scriptures, logic and experience. So with the help of Shruti, Yukti, and Anubhava support, when the teaching is presented systematically, it is totally different from preaching. Preaching is useful to inspire. But Brahma Yajna is teaching.

The difference is like dumping some bricks in the courtyard. Bricks dumped will not be of any use, they have to be arranged in a systematic manner. Arranged bricks alone will form a house in which you can live. When I give some stray ideas through preaching, I am only dumping some bricks which will not be useful to you. You will have to re-arrange it and make it a total teaching. And you cannot arrange the bricks – a mason is required.

Teaching is not only giving ideas but arranging the ideas in a systematically developed manner so that you have a beautiful vision in which you will get security, peace and happiness. And therefore Brahma Yajna is a very important one.

Previously Brahma Yajna was there in Gurukula Sampradāya where this teaching was given. But nowadays, this practice is going away. And if it has been revived to a certain extent, the credit goes to Swami Chinmayānanda and Swami Dayānandā. They brought the scriptures in the form of teachings. Previously discourses were there and teaching was only minor. But now in a major scale as a movement, teaching people, taking students and conducting classes and requesting them to write notes and compare notes, ask questions, clarify doubts like a University education has been done by the Swāmis. Brahma Yajna is a systematic teaching as this is also a science which has to be thoroughly understood. It is not a set of beliefs to be blindly followed but is a set of teaching that has to be understood.

Thus Brahma Yajna also comes under Para Upakāra because:

Vidyā Dhanam Sarva Dhanāt Pradhānam

You can give different forms of money, do different forms of charity, but the best among them is Vidya Dānam Brahma Yajna. That is why in the end of the Gītā, Krishna says, whoever teaches the Bhagavad Gītā, I love him the most.

5.1.1.4. Manushya Yajna – Remembrance of humanity

The fourth Yajna is Manushya Yajna. All forms of social service will come under this. Running orphanages, helping old people who cannot have any help, building schools, hospitals etc.

The problem now is Manushya Yajna can replace all the other four Yajnāhā. This is

because of lack of proper understanding. This is like saying human beings need only carbohydrates. Manushya Yajna, a social service can never be a replacement for others. In addition to Manushya Yajna, we have to handle the others also.

5.1.1.5. Bhūta Yajna – Remembrance of non-human living beings

This is the fifth Yajna - Bhūta Yajna. All forms of contribution to all living being other than living being – non-human living beings. I should remember that all the other living beings are also contributing to my happy life. This has been proved only now by the study of ecology. Therefore I should remember the animals, plants and just as they are helping for my survival, I should also contribute.

*Ashvattho Vata Vruksha Chandana Tarur Mandāra Kalpa Drumau
Jambū Nimba Kadamba Chūta Saralā Vrukshāshcha Yeh Kshīrinaha
Sarve Te Phala Samyutā Pratidinam Vibhrājanam Rājate
Ramyam Chaitra Ratham Cha Nandanavanam Kurvantu No Mangalam*

Let the banyan, fig tree and sandalwood tree,
Let the flowering coral tree and the wish giving tree,
Let the Jamun, Lime, Kadamba, mango and the pine tree,
Which are the chose ones among trees,
And which daily are fruitful,
And create rules of plenty,
Let the pretty chaithra forest and garden,
Do all that is good to us.

Let me remember all the trees, let me grow and nourish so that they will do Mangalam to the entire humanity.

And not only trees, this applies to rivers as well.

*Gangā Sindhu Sarasvati Cha Yamunā Godāvari Narmadā
Kāveri Sarayu Mahendra Tanayā Charmavati Vedikā
Kshipra Vetravati Mahāsura Nadi Khyātā Cha Yā Gandaki
Pūrṇā Pūrṇa Jalaihi Samudra Sahitāhā Kurvantu No Mangalam.*

Let the rivers, Ganges, Indus, Saraswathi and Yamuna,
Let the rivers Godavari and Narmada,
Let the rivers Kaveri, Sarayu who is the daughter of Indra,
Let the vedic river Charmavathi,
Let Kshipra and Vetravati the great river of gods,
Let the very famous Gandaki,
And let the ocean with its completely full water,
Do all that is good to us.

From the rivers in topmost India to the rivers in the south, I will remember all your contribution. If I will not do any kind of contribution to them, at least I will not pollute or

destroy them. So this contribution, if I cannot do in a larger scale, they have a Tulasi tree at home; at least pour water to the Tulasi tree. If you cannot offer to all animals, before eating, at least keep some rice outside – some crows or cows will eat.

This is awareness of the totality. Vaidika means universal citizen. This is because he is aware of this world, he remembers the stars and planets. In the daily Sandhyāvandanam , all the planets are invoked – Ādityam Tarpayāmi, Somam Tarpayāmi, Angārakam Tarpayāmi. He remembers all the planets and the entire solar system. This grand awareness I should have and I should contribute and this is called Pancha Mahā Yajñāha. This is called Nishkāma Karmāni, Sāttvika Karmāni, Uttama Karmāni, Para Upakāra Karmāni – they will contribute to spiritual growth primarily.

5.1.2. Madhyama Karmāni – Middle actions

These are the second set of Karmās. These are all the Sakāma Karmāni [selfish actions] also called Rājasa Karmāni also called Para Udāsana Karmāni. Para Udāsana Karma means those actions in which I ignore other people and am indifferent to others where I don't bother about even their existence or problems. I am concerned only about my selfish karmas. They will help in the material well being but they do not contribute much to the spiritual growth – either nil or limited.

All Kāmya Karmās – selfish Karmas, whether ritualistic or non-ritualistic come under Madhyama Karmāni.

5.1.3. Adhama Karmāni – Worst actions

Finally comes Adhama Karmas, Tāmasa Karmāni, or Nishiddha Karmāni – prohibited actions or corrupted actions or destructive actions or Para Apakāra Karmāni. In this, I benefit but it is harmful to others and these Karmāni not only do they not help me spiritually but also bring us down spiritually.

Hence the first one leads to spiritual Elevation, second one leads to spiritual stagnation and the third one leads to spiritual retrogression. These are the three Karmāni introduced by the scriptures. The scriptures point out that the Karma yogi's attempt is to change the proportion of the Karmāni in such a way that the Uttama Karmāni are dominant in our lives, Madhyama Karmāni are less dominant and Adhama Karmāni are to be zero. The scriptures point out that even if some inevitable Adhama Karmāni are there, because of unavoidable situations – called Sūna – unavoidable Para Apakāra Karmāni (e.g. using insecticides) they can be neutralised by Uttama Karmāni. Thus Uttama Karmāni help in two ways – they contribute to spiritual growth and also neutralise the Pāpam born out of inevitable Sūna.

5.2. Right Attitude

Any attitude is born out of right understanding. One can never develop a healthy and lasting attitude unless he understands the principles. Whenever you do an action, the

moment you do an action, it becomes part of the universe. It has left my hands. And once the Karma has become part of the universe, all the universal laws will act on the Karmas. That is because everything in creation is acted upon by the laws in the universe.

The thus processed Karma is called Phalam. Thus every Karma is processed by the universal laws, becomes Phalam and is handed over back to me. The scriptures point out, all the universal laws are tools in the hands of the Lord to maintain the harmony of creation and therefore when I say the laws are processing the Karmas, it essentially means God is processing the Karmāni through the tool of his own universal laws. Therefore Karma is going to God for processing and is coming from the Lord in a processed form called Phalam.

The moment you know this fact and remember this fact, every Karma becomes Īshvara Arpanam. For an enlightened Karma yogi, every action is Īshvara Arpana and this is called Ishvara Arpana Bhāvanā – born out of this awareness. And when I perform the actions out of Ishvara Arpana Bhāvanā, and when I receive the processed Karma in form of Phalam, I don't call it Karma Phalam, but I call it Īshvara Prasādaha. Because what comes from God is a Prasāda, therefore sacred, therefore cannot be rejected or criticised and received with a sense of fulfilment.

Hence while acting, Ishvara Arpana Bhāvanā and while receiving the result, Prasāda Bhāvanā, this is called Yogaha. And when I have these two Bhāvanāhā, I enjoy an equanimous mind, Samattvam Yogaha Uchyate because I am enthusiastic in every action. There is no dullness, there is no drudgery or boredom because every action is offering to the Lord. Hence I love everything that I do and accept all experiences in life because they are Īshvara Prasādaha which will lead to Samattvam. Samattva Bhāvanā is the result of Īshvara Arpana Prasāda Bhāvanā. These two put together will lead to very fast spiritual growth. This is called Chitta Shuddhihi.

Chitta Shuddhihi can be put in the simplest context as – I can understand that all my problems in life are not caused by the world, but are caused by my wrong handling of the world because of my ignorance. So the ignorant I handles the world wrongly, and hence I suffer. If I become the wise I, I know how to handle the world which is Nandanavanam – Sampūrnām Jagadeva Nanadanavanam. So ignorant-I is the problem and wise-I is the solution – this diagnosis is the result of Karma Yoga which is otherwise called Chitta Shuddhihi.

Tuesday, 1 April 2008

6. Upāsana Yoga – Right Action

In the last few sessions, we saw a framework for Vaidikas and then a course of discipline for the accomplishment of all the four human goals – focussing on Moksha as the final goal. This course of discipline can be broadly classified into three, each one being called a Yogaha:

- Karma Yoga
- Upāsana Yoga
- Jnāna Yoga

We saw Karma Yoga in the previous Yoga – proper action and proper attitude and the propriety of the action is determined by its capacity for giving inner growth. The propriety of the action is not governed by its capacity for material accomplishment – which were always considered incidental – propriety is measured in terms of its capacity for giving inner growth. And proper attitude we saw because attitude can change the quality of the action and response to the result of the action also. Attitude is as much important as the action itself. This was Karma Yoga and has been elaborately dealt with in the Gītā especially in the third chapter.

We will now go through the Upāsana Yoga and Shankarāchārya sometimes calls it Samādhi Yogaha. The purpose of Upāsana Yoga is a program to make our personality fit for the accomplishment of the Purushārtha – Purushārtha Yogyatā Sampadanārtham. This is to make the personality Purushārtha-worthy. This is because the entire life's journey is nothing but a journey to accomplish the human goals. Upāsana Yoga can be presented as a personality-conditioning programme.

In the Kathopanishad, our very personality is compared to a vehicle for reaching the goal. Just as a vehicle should be in fit condition for travelling and successfully reaching the goal, our personality must be in a fit condition. For this purpose, our scriptures divide our personality into different layers for the facility for handling. This is because we are a complex personality and cannot be handled in one go, it has to be subdivided into layers for the facility of handling. And this layer-wise division is done in several angles – sometimes as Kosha Panchakam or Sharīra Trayam – when different methods are used. For the convenience of our study, we will divide our personality into three layers which have to be carefully conditioned. This is popular in the Shāstrams and hence an important classification.

The first layer of our personality is Kāyikam. This is from the standpoint of the physical body. The second aspect of our personality is Vāchikam because we have a developed organ of speech – this not only displays our personality but also influences our personality. The third is the Manasa Amshaha – our psychological personality which the subtlest and most important and extremely difficult to handle but this cannot be ignored. Our scriptures take into account all three layers of personality and also prescribe programs for conditioning these layers.

6.1. Physical body

The first one is the physical personality of physical body. We all know that the physical body is the most important instrument through which we have to accomplish everything in life, whether it is material pursuit or spiritual pursuit. Therefore scriptures uniformly declare never to neglect the physical body or health. Throughout the scriptures we have prayers

e.g. *Aroga Drudha Gātra Sampathyartham*

Or we say this before consuming medicines:

Sharīre Jarjaribhūte Vyādhigraste Kalevare

Oushadham Jānhavi Toyam Vaidyo Nārāyano Harihi

When the Sharīram (body) is suffering and the body is beset with disease,
The medicine is the sacred water of the Ganga and the doctor is Lord Nārāyanā

It is not only in the materialistic portion of the Vedas, even in the spiritual portion in the Vedāntik Shānti Pāthās, many prayers are for fit personalities. Physical fitness and attention towards that is extremely important.

Unfortunately, health is always taken for granted until we get struck with diseases. The law is Preservation of health is far more easier than trying to recover the lost health. Preservation of health is least expensive and least time-consuming whereas once the health is lost, trying to get it back is more time-consuming and expensive. One who cannot voluntarily give time for health will have to forcibly give time to diseases. Allied with health the scriptures talk about diet and exercises. Health-maintenance should not be looked upon as pampering of the body. Pampering of the body arises only when physical is considered as an end in itself or physical health is regarded for unworthy goals. It does not come under pampering but comes under Sādhanāni.

6.2. Verbal Conditioning

The next layer of personality is Vāchika Amshaha. This also is considered extremely important. Shankarāchārya points out in Vivekachūdāmani:

Yogasya Prathamam Dvāram Vān Nirodho Parigrahaha Nirāsha Cha Nirīhā Cha

Speech discipline is referred to by Krishna in the seventeenth chapter where he talks about observation of four parameters:

6.2.1. Anudvega Karam – Harmless

Make sure that your speech does not hurt anyone. Ahimsā at Vāk level is the first stage. All forms of abuse, criticisms, blaming, denigration, arguments are all Himsā. An easy way to determine what is unacceptable is first understand what hurts me due to others' speech. Once identified, my first aim is to avoid all these items of speech and if unavoidable, then I should know how to do it so that the hurt is minimised or neutralised – just as the doctor anaesthetises the person before cutting the person's body

6.2.2. Satyam – Truthful

Satyam means truthfulness. This is one of the most important disciplines which is the stepping-stone to reach Brahman or God which is none other than Satyam. Only by speaking the truth we can reach the absolute Satyam. Truth in the empirical plane will help win truth in the absolute plane. Empirical truth is a verbal discipline and absolute truth is

God. Therefore every Asatyam is taking me away from God.

Asato Mā SatgaMāyā – Oh Lord. Please take me away from Asat. Every lie takes me away from God or truth whether white lies or not. I should sensitise my mind to such an extent that every lie should disturb me and the disturbance should become deep and long-lasting. The pain caused by lie should become so deep that the benefit attained by lying should become insignificant and I effortlessly drop lying. The Pāpam obtained by unavoidable lies can be reduced to an extent by certain Prāyaschittam – voluntary undergoing of pain.

6.2.3. Priyam – Agreeable

This is the third parameter of Vāk Tapas. This means that your speech must be pleasant in terms of decibels. Soft, slow, polite and gentle (Mangala Shabdham) should be used. Give up all the Amangala Shabdāhā.

6.2.4. Hitam – Helpful

This means whatever is good to the listener also. Find out whether it is good for the listener also. One of the worst forms of Himsā is talking to a person who is not interested in you. This is the worst form of verbal violence. And the bitter fact is generally nobody wants to listen to us !

6.3. Mental Conditioning

The Third Layer is Mānasa Amshaha – the mental conditioning programme. All forms of meditation comes under Mental Conditioning programme, though meditation is not the only method of mental conditioning. Primarily the word Upāsana means Meditation for Mental Conditioning. Since mind cannot be handled without taking care of body and speech, we include body conditioning and speech conditioning as a stepping stone for mental conditioning. This is because mind is a subtle instrument and is not that easy to control the mind. Hence first start with physical and verbal discipline and then come to the mind. Therefore the first two become indirect methods for conditioning the mind later.

That is why any meditation programme will include physical and verbal discipline. In Ashtānga Yoga of Patanjali, even though the purpose is mental conditioning, Patanjali talks about physical and verbal discipline. The sixth chapter of the Gītā is titled Meditation but Krishna talks about Āhāra Niyama. Body and mind are connected as speech and mind are as well. Therefore when one is highly emotional (e.g. anger) it is difficult to talk slowly and softly. All psychosomatic studies reveal that your mental and physical bodies are connected and therefore our approach is through the body and speech, we try to handle the mind. Therefore Upāsana primarily means mental discipline and secondarily means physical and verbal discipline as well.

For the sake of our convenience, we can classify all forms of meditation into four types based on the type of discipline that we want to inculcate in the mind i.e. the aspect of the

mind that we want to handle. The four forms are

6.3.1. Relaxation meditation

Any form of meditation where the aim is relaxing the mind in particular and relaxing all the other parts of the body in general. These include physical withdrawal, verbal withdrawal, sensorial withdrawal. This is to culminate in the relaxation of the mind. This is particularly important in today's times because life has become very fast-paced and stressful as well. Hence relaxation meditation can be termed de-stressing meditation. Learn to sit for a few minutes every day just relaxing. This is required for the physical and mental health. Any technique or methodology used does not matter – e.g. repeating a mantra, watching your breath or just repeating Shānti.

6.3.2. Focussing meditation

This is concentration meditation where I train my mind to develop attention and attention span. The capacity to focus in a field for a length of time whether it is material or spiritual field. This is required for everything – sports, studying, listening to a class. Generally in our scriptures, Mānasa Pūja or mental worship of the Lord is prescribed. Also are included, Mānasa Pārāyanam referring to mentally chanting something or Mānasa Japa referring to mentally chanting one Nāmaha (name) of the Lord. The difference between Pārāyanam and Japa is that Pārāyanam refers to chanting any prayer, in Japa only one name of the Lord is taken.

6.3.3. Expansion meditation

Here I learn to expand my mind to visualise the totality of creation. Only then do we know our relative significance – which is nothing but zero! We have a wrong perspective with regards to our life and situations – i.e. our problems are the most important, without us the world will come to an end. Such a wrong perspective leads to wrong responses. Everything should be put into its place and I will know my place only when I look at myself from the standpoint of totality. It is the meditation of the creation itself, stars, galaxies, sky, solar system and planets and continents and rivers and mountains, birds, animals, and human beings. This is called Vishva Rūpa Dhyana, as we look up the creation as the Universal Form of God. So in this form of meditation, we visualise the totality.

6.3.4. Value meditation

This is also called Transformation meditation. Here I have to bring about a total, inner transformation by changing my thought-pattern. We generally neglect our thought-pattern because it is too subtle and too fleeting and the other people don't see that. But we should remember, our thought-pattern determines our life, our journey and our destiny.

“Watch your thoughts, they become your words,
Watch your words, they become your action,
Watch your actions they become your habit,

Watch your habits they become your character,
Watch your character, it becomes your destiny”

Hence thought is the subtlest Bījam or seed that determines your future.

Yad Bhāvam Tad Bhavati

As you think so you become.

6.3.4.1. Daivī Sampat and Āsurī Sampat – Divine & Demonic Thought-patterns

In Shastra, it is known by two technical words – Tat Kratunyāyaha or Bhramara Kītanyāyaha. Never neglect watching or being aware of your thought-patterns. They determine your future - therefore inner transformation of our thought-pattern is necessary. The scriptures also give us what is the thought-pattern which will take me towards the Spiritual goal – Daivī Sampat in the 16th chapter of Gītā. The other set of thought-patterns is known as Āsurī Sampat which will take me away from the goal.

Āsurī Sampat include jealousy, depression, impatience, irritation – these are nothing but thoughts only. Remember that thoughts are like bricks which determine the shape of the building. If the shape of the building has to be changed, you have to change the brick arrangements. If you have to transform your life, you have to transform your thought-pattern. Therefore I just change my thought and visualise myself as a transformed person – I am patient, I am confident to face my life. You repeat the thought that I am diffident and I will only be incapable. Nowadays even diseases can be cured by just willing health. Mind is a powerful instrument with a tremendous Sankalpa Shakti – Resolution Strength. This Value meditation is exploiting or utilising our Sankalpa Shakti. This is the fourth type of meditation.

The above four forms of meditation will condition my mind and make my mind healthy and Purushārtha-Worthy.

6.3.5. Team work of Body Speech and Mind

Then comes the final topic. Not only should the personalities be healthy (i.e. the body, speech and mind), not only should they be individually healthy, the most important thing is they should function in integration or coordination. So not only is conditioning important, their integration which is now called Team Work is important as well. Body, speech and mind should not function at cross purposes. In fact everytime we lie, we are breaking the coordination by creating a division between speech and mind. Punctuality is a very important discipline to integrate the personality. It is called Aarjavam - Team work of the personality. Thus individual health and team work or integration have to be taken care of and the scheme prescribed by the Shāstrams is Upāsana Yogaha, otherwise called Samādhi Yogaha or Ashtānga Yogaha.

Of course there is no chronology between Karma Yoga and Upāsana Yoga. Maybe at a particular stage you might be focussing more on one or the other. All are equally important.

Once we have gone through the first and second discipline, we are ready for the third and most important course of discipline called Jnāna Yogaha which we will see eventually.

Friday, 4 April 2008

7. Jnāna Yoga

Earlier we saw that the scriptures first present an ideal infrastructure for the fulfilment of the human goals or Purushārthāhā. After presenting the infrastructure the scriptures also present a course of discipline for the accomplishment of these goals. This course of discipline we classified into three – Karma Yoga, Upāsana Yoga and Jnana Yoga. Upāsana Yoga is also known as Samādhi Yoga.

Jnāna Yoga means a course of discipline meant for gaining knowledge. Jnāna Prāptyartham Yogaha. And when you talk about a course of discipline meant for Jnāna or knowledge, the question arises – knowledge of what ? Because knowledge should always have an object and here we point out in the context of Jnāna Yoga, the word Jnāna refers to self-knowledge, Atman Jnāna, i.e. knowledge regarding oneself. And when we say knowledge regarding oneself, we already have some knowledge – our date of birth, name of parents, height or weights etc. So we do have some knowledge about our superficial personality.

But what we discuss in Jnāna Yoga is the essential nature of “I”, the basic nature of “I”, the real nature of “I” or the higher nature of “I” – the Parā Prakriti. In the scriptures the real “I” is called Ātmā. Hence Jnāna Yoga means Ātmā Jnāna Yogaha – a course of discipline meant for gaining self-knowledge. The purpose of gaining this self-knowledge, as pointed out by the scriptures, is that self-knowledge gives us freedom or Moksha Purushārthaha – the highest goal called Moksha. So Jnāna Yogaha Mokshārtham.

Then comes the natural question – what is meant by Mokshaha. This has been briefly dealt with earlier when talking about Dharma Artha Kāma Moksha Purushārthaha. Moksha is freedom from bondage or dependence. This bondage is caused by the first three Purushārtha namely Dharma Artha Kāmaha. Any thing or being in the creation can cause bondage. What type of bondage is this ? Bondage is of two types :-

- When an object is present – The presence of objects causes a bondage called Bhāraha. The stress or strain of handling the object or person. Handling the object or person or relationship itself especially if it is a human relationship, that itself becomes a very big Bhāraha. In fact when many people face problems, it is the stress and strain caused by human relationship.
- When an object is not present – This creates another problem called emptiness or loneliness.

So I am not sure whether I want them or I don't want them. When I don't have them I crave to have them and once I have them, I crave for freedom. Either way, I am in a soup.

This is called Ubhayataha Pāshā Rajjuhu. And by Moksha we mean, I am free from this problem caused by the world. This means the presence of objects will not cause strain in me if I am a free person and the absence will not create emptiness in me. The presence of people will not create the strain of relating and the absence of people will not create loneliness without companion. So if I can have Dharma Artha Kāma when they are there and I can be happy even if the Dharma Artha Kāma are not there, either way I am fine – this is called Freedom. With objects or people I am fine, even without objects or people I am fine. And this Freedom is the result of self-knowledge. This inner freedom expresses in the form of threefold virtues which are very useful for human life.

7.1. Virtues of Inner freedom

The threefold virtues are presented in a prayer called Serenity prayer. Serenity means balance of mind – Samattvam. In this prayer we address the Lord and ask for these three virtues.

Oh Lord, grant me the serenity to accept what cannot be changed in life,
Oh Lord, grant me the courage to change what can be changed in life,
Oh Lord, grant me the wisdom to know what can and cannot be changed

These are the three virtues – acceptance, courage and discretion. And by acceptance, we do not mean a negative acceptance like “what cannot be cured must be endured” with a sense of being victimised. Acceptance in fact refers to balanced cheerful acceptance which will not lead to bitterness, hatred, sense of victimisation, sense of injustice or produce any negative reaction. This is healthy acceptance. Life will become beautiful when I can healthily accept all the choiceless situations and courageously change what can be transformed and I am able to discern which is which. These are the three virtues that I get through the freedom of self-knowledge.

The next question is: How can I get self-knowledge ? What is the discipline of Jnāna Yoga that I should follow to gain the knowledge of myself ?

We say, any Jnānam can be attained only by one method and that is by using the instrument of knowledge. Any knowledge can be acquired only by using an instrument of knowledge. In Sanskrit an instrument of knowledge is called Pramānam . The one who uses the instrument of knowledge is called Pramātā and the knowledge that is generated i.e. the Jnānam is called Pramā and the object that is known is called Prameyam. This Pramātā uses Pramānam and acquires Pramā with regards to the Prameyam.

Without using an instrument of knowledge we cannot get the knowledge. For example, if I have to get the knowledge of the colour of an object I have no option but to use the instrument called the eyes. If I want to know what is the sound, I have to use the instrument of ears. Without using the eyes, Varna Jnānam cannot take place, without using the ears, Sahbda Jnānam cannot take place etc. Our scriptures have made an elaborate study on the topic of Pramānam and they point out that there are five instruments of knowledge at our disposal.

7.2. Instruments of knowledge

Since these five instruments of knowledge are available to human beings, they are called Paurusheya Pramānāni. These are:

7.2.1. Perception

You get the knowledge by using the fivefold sense organs – Eyes, Ears, Nose, Tongue and Skin and by perceiving through the five sense organs, we get perceptual knowledge. This is called Pratyaksham

7.2.2. Inference

In Sanskrit this is called Anumānam

7.2.3. Postulate

In Sanskrit this is called Arthapattihi

7.2.4. Comparision

In Sanskrit this is called Upamānam

7.2.5. Non-Cognition

In Sanskrit this is called Anupalabdhihi

These are the Pancha Paurusheya Pramānāni. And for all practical purposes, we can reduce the above five to two – Perception and Inference. Now we have to find, which Pramānam should I use to gain a particular knowledge especially self-knowledge. The Shāstrams point out that the instrument that you make use of will depend on the object that you want to know. It does not depend on your fancy or your will. If I have to know the colour of an object, I have not choice but to use the eyes. Jnānam is acquired by using the appropriate Pramānam.

We want to gain self-knowledge and have to find out which instrument or Pramānam to use and when I make an enquiry I enter into a big problem. All the five instruments at my disposal, are extrovert instruments capable of studying only the objective world or external world. None of these instruments is capable of studying the very subject behind these instrument. This is the intrinsic limitation of the Pancha Pramānāni and also science. Science can only study the objective universe but cannot study the student. The eyes can perceive everything in the creation but unfortunately the eyes have a peculiar limitation that the eyes cannot see themselves. This is because eyes are extrovert, they can never study themselves. The Law is – Subject is never subject to objectification. Similarly I cannot study myself.

Self-knowledge will be elusive for the human being and all material sciences. But there is a way out. If I have to see my own eyes, I have to learn to take the help of another external object or factor – a mirror to see my eyes. I should be humble enough to accept

that my eyes cannot directly see themselves and therefore I require the assistance of an external mirror. With the help of the mirror I can see my own eyes. Similarly all the Paurusheya Pramānāni are inadequate to give me self-knowledge unless I introduce a sixth Pramānam or sixth factor that will serve as a mirror for gaining self-knowledge. I have to accept the necessity of a sixth Pramānam which is not in my hands and this must come from outside. That sixth Pramānam is called Shāstra Pramānam – the scriptural teaching.

7.3. Shāstra Pramānam – Scripture: Sixth Pramānam

This is also called Shabda Pramānam. And this Shāstram Pramānam is not already with me. It has to be brought from outside like a mirror and therefore it is called Apaurusheya Pramānam. This means not naturally available to human being and it has to be brought from outside. This Shāstra Pramānam has been gifted to us just like God has given mirrors for seeing our own face. If mirrors were not there, eternally our own beauty will not be available for us to see. Thus God has gifted us with Shāstra Pramānam to enjoy our inner beauty. If you refuse to use the mirror, it is only us who is going to be the loser. Using this alone can we get self-knowledge.

The next thing we come to know is, even though the mirror is capable of showing us our face, to enjoy it we should know how to use the mirror properly. Anything will help only if we know how to use. In the same way, Shāstram or scriptures can help only if we study the scriptures properly. If you handle the scriptures properly we can see our beauty and get self-knowledge.

7.4. Information – Direct Experience dichotomy

And when I try to study the scriptures and use the scriptures myself, I get into another big problem. Because scriptures, unlike other forms of literature, use a peculiar method to impart self-knowledge. This is because of the uniqueness of the subject matter, the Self, and the uniqueness of the knowledge, the scriptures make use of a unique method.

Normally books deal with different object, places and people in the creation and therefore my orientation is that I should get the information first, and then later convert that into direct experience by contacting the object. E.g. I read what is Niagara Falls (getting the information first) and when I go there actually only then will I get direct experience out of contact. Therefore our orientation in any study is Information – Direct Experience dichotomy.

But when it comes to self-knowledge the problem is that we do not have these two stages at all. Because if you are talking about the two stages, the information should be got first, then the direct experience will be got when I come in contact with the self. But unfortunately you will never come in contact with the self because you are the Self. Hence the information – direct experience dichotomy does not exist in self-knowledge. But we always incorrectly study the scriptures with this orientation of first book knowledge then direct experience. Hence we never know how to utilise the scriptures properly and

therefore we never get the self-knowledge if we study the scriptures ourselves.

7.5. Threefold Exercise

If self-knowledge is not information or direct experience, then what is self-knowledge? Self-knowledge is freedom from self ignorance. Therefore scriptural study is different from studying other books and scriptural study requires a difference type of operation or method called Jnāna Yogaha. And this Jnāna Yoga consists of a threefold exercise called Shravanam Mananam and Nididhyāsanam.

7.5.1. Shravanam – Hearing

Shravanam means exposing myself to the scriptural teaching handled by a competent guide. Because it is unlike the study of another objective literature. If we study the scriptures by ourselves, we end up in information - experience dichotomy. Eternally we would be trapped in search of either information or experience. Therefore if you should not be trapped in this, this teaching should be handled by someone who knows expertly how to handle and remove the orientation of information experience and gives self-knowledge removing self ignorance.

Therefore Shravanam is exposing myself to the systematic teaching or handling of the scriptures done by an expert guide and for a length of time – because orientation breaking takes time. The study has to be systematic because it is a gradual build-up from beginning to end. It should be a stray study of unconnected topics. It should be systematic in the sense that between one topic and another, there should be a gradual build-up with a connection. It is like building a house where a number of bricks are arranged in an orderly manner well cemented. Only then it becomes a house that can be occupied. But the same number of bricks dumped in one place cannot become a house and we cannot live in that house. And the bricks will be more of an obstacle than a useful thing. Similarly gathering stray ideas by reading books here and there, without building up gradually and without connecting the topics, then our brain will be full of piled up ideas like the piled up bricks and they will be cluttered in the brain. It will not be of any use and will create more problems than benefits. Similarly Vedāntik study will be beneficial only when there is a systematic study.

The study should be continuous. Even in the case of laying bricks, before the cement hardens we should lay the bricks and then some more cement on it and then more bricks before the cement hardens. The whole process should be continuous without gaps and for a length of time.

This Shravanam has to continue for a length of time during which time no questions are allowed. We have to get the comprehensive teaching from all angles in all aspects in its totality. And this process is called Shravanam. Even if you are not able to accept a part of the teaching or have a doubt regarding a particular aspect of teaching, you are allowed to keep aside those questions and doubts and listen with an open mind. You are free to

disagree with the teacher. Be patient. Shravanam requires a lot of patience. Never be judgemental or critical.

7.5.2. Mananam – Reflection / Consolidation of intellectual understanding

During Mananam I try to tie all the ideas of Vedanta and make a garland out of the teaching so that every idea fits into the grand building of Vedanta. Every brick has got a role to play in the house. Every window is part of a grand scheme. Similarly every idea of Vedanta should become part of the grand design of Vedāntik teaching – the study of the individual, the study of the total, the study of Aikyam, the study of Sādhana Chatushtaya Sampattihi.

As even I am connecting, I must be able to go back, take all the topics and should know where they all stand. What is the role of Karma Yoga ? What is the role of Upāsana Yoga ? Everything should fall in its place when I look back at it. Doubts will surely arise.

When I look at a topic individually, doubts may not arise. But when I try to connect one topic to another, there may be seeming contradictions or one topic may not find its place properly. After comprehensively listening and being exposed to the teaching for a length of time, I bring out all my questions. Generally the beauty of the teaching is, by the time you complete your teaching systematically, doubts will not be there. Because the scriptures themselves handle the possible questions – hence it is in the form of a dialogue – Guru Shishya Samvādaha. You are given full freedom to your rational mind, logical mind, scientific mind, intellectual acumen to raise any question. The teacher is available to answer or to help the student in removing all kinds of doubts because doubts are obstacles to knowledge.

Vedanta encourages asking any number of questions. Vedanta is knowledge. Vedanta is not a faith or belief. In a system of faith, questions are discouraged as it is considered to be disrespectful to the teacher or teaching. Questions are to be asked until all the questions subside.

How do I know when all the questions are subsided or not ? I must be able to say I am the Parama Ātmā – Aham Brahma Asmi – I am immortal – I am all pervading – I survive the death of the body – the world cannot affect me. Each one of the statements, I must be able to make from the inner most core of my heart. And when I ask my own intellect whether it is convinced, it must say yes.

Hence Mananam removes all obstacles in the intellect and makes the knowledge into doubtless knowledge or conviction. Mananam is the process of conviction – solving the intellectual problems. Doubts belong to the intellect, therefore Mananam is solving the intellectual problem and hence Mananam is an intellectual process.

Nisamshaya Jnānam [firm understanding] with regards to my essential nature my real or higher nature. Shravanam removes ignorance, Mananam removes doubts or intellectual problems.

7.5.3. Nididhyāsanam – Contemplation / Assimilation, transformation of emotions

Then comes the process of Nididhyāsanam which is the process of internalisation or assimilation of this knowledge and the removal of my habitual behaviour. This also involves solving emotional problems in the light of Jnānam. Ultimately even though Samsara is a problem of ignorance, the ignorance is appearing or expressing in the form of emotional turmoil alone. Basic problem may be by Ajnānam but I am facing this problem in the form of Rāga Dvesha Kāma Krodhaha Lobha Moha Mada Mātsarya and Bhayam. [like, dislike, lust, anger, greed, delusion, illusion, envy, fear]. Unless the emotional problems are solved, I have not assimilated the knowledge totally.

The present behaviour I have developed very gradually, it is a habit, a conditioning that I have – this I have to de-condition myself. This process is called Nididhyāsanam or assimilation. Only when the habitual behaviour goes away, do I get the full benefit of this knowledge. We have been Samsārī, petty, ignorant, bitter people and that personality has influenced our responses, our goals. Everything has been governed by our idea about ourselves. How you behave depends on how you look at yourself.

Every behaviour depends on your self image. As long as you have a miserable self image, your behaviour will be miserable. And even if the Guru transforms the self image, the old self image continues for a length of time. Hence we need some time during which we should allow the transformation to take place. And that process is called Nididhyāsanam in which I keep in touch with the Shāstram even if the study part is over. I keep in touch with the Jnānis or wise people, Satsanga or Shāstra Sanga because the association influences my personality. Not only do I keep in touch with Shāstra, I lead an alert life, monitoring my responses and making sure that every response in every situation is governed by the new teaching and not by the old misunderstood personality. And assimilated knowledge alone nourishes me like assimilated food nourishes food. It is not the amount of food that I eat that matters, but the amount of food that I digest alone that matters.

Swami Chinmayānanda put it “You may have gone through ten Upanishads. Wonderful. How many Upanishads have gone through you ?” Hence conversion of intellectual knowledge into emotional strength is called Nididhyāsanam. This can be done as follows :

All emotional problems will express themselves in two forms :

- One is choice-less situations which requires acceptance. We should sufficient emotional strength to accept whatever is choiceless
- Other is choice-ful situation which can be changed or improved where the emotional mind should not obstruct my effort to improve the situation.

A weak mind creates problems in two ways :

- When there is a choiceless situation, the weak mind goes on saying “Don’t accept it” – which means I keep mumbling and grumbling all time knowing that this will not change

the situation because it is choiceless. Therefore strengthening the emotional mind to accept the choiceless is the purpose of this knowledge.

- If the mind is weak and is worrying over the choiceless, then the problem is that our time is spent in worrying that where we can improve we will not be available for improving the situation. Worrying over the choiceless becomes an obstacle in improving over the choiceful or where the improvement is possible. Hence I should work on the situations that can be improved.

This is called emotional strength. Face the situation. If the situation is a choiceless one, I learn to accept it and forget it and go for the next one. And I try to improve the situation to the extent possible. There also there may be a limitation. Once I reach another choiceless situation, again I understand it and I go for the next. Like the bulldozer I face the day-to-day life with emotional strength. And this emotional strength is possible only when the knowledge is presiding over my day to day life.

Therefore Shraavanam and Mananam and Nididhyāsanam is Jnāna Yogaha. And this Jnāna Yoga will give self-knowledge. Self-knowledge will give Moksha which means I am free in the presence and absence of things, people, my life and even in death. This is Jnāna Yogaha the subtlest form of Sādhanā.

7.5.4. Role of Āshrama Dharma

You should remember, all the three Yogas, Karma Yoga, Upāsana Yoga and Jnāna Yoga are compulsory for all people and not given as optional Yogas. Every body requires these and the culmination is in self-knowledge which give me Moksha. If at all there is a person who comes to Jnāna Yoga without Karma Yoga or Upāsana Yoga, he cannot be successful. And if at all a person skips Karma Yoga or Upāsana Yoga and successfully gains Jnānam, the scriptures say he must have gone through both of these in his past Janma . If you study the Āshrama scheme, you will find that the four Āshramas are designed for the pursuit of these three Yogas only.

Even though these three are not air-tight compartment compartments, there is a domination of a particular Yoga in a particular stage in life.

In BrahmĀchārya Āshrama it is primarily studying the theory – what is life, what is the goal. The other three Āshramas are meant for predominantly practicing the three Yogas.

Grihastha Āshrama is Karma Yoga Pradhānaha; Vānaprastha Āshrama is Upāsana Yoga Pradhāna; Sanyāsa Āshrama is Jnāna Yoga Pradhānaha.

These three different infrastructures are presented for predominantly practicing these three Yogas. Even if you do not go through these four Āshramas physically, you will have to make the appropriate modifications in your lifestyle depending on which Yoga you dominantly practice. And therefore adjust the infrastructure follow the three Yogas, gain knowledge and be free. Being a free person either enjoy Dharma Artha Kāma presence, or enjoy the absence of Dharma Artha Kāma. This is the vision of all the scriptures primary as

well as secondary.

Saturday, 5 April 2008

8. Bhakti Yoga

Today we will deal with the topic of Bhakti found in the scriptures and a topic with various shades of meaning in different contexts and therefore often a confusing topic also. So we should clearly understand what Bhakti is. The word Bhakti is used in the scriptures in two different meanings.

8.1. First Meaning of Bhakti - Devotion to God

One is Bhakti as in devotion towards God. Devotion is nothing but a love directed towards a higher principle. Whenever love is directed towards some principle which we revere, which is sacred, that love is called Devotion. Reverential love can be called as devotion. We talk about Mātrū Bhakti, Pitru Bhakti because in our tradition we look upon our parents as superior, holy, deserving, respect worthy. Similarly we talk about Guru Bhakti and Desha Bhakti and Īshvara Bhakti. This love has been very elaborately analysed in our scriptures both in its general form as love and also in its specific form as in love of God.

8.1.1. Forms of love

Scriptures point out that all forms of love that a human being entertains is directed towards only three things.

8.1.1.1. Love towards Goals

The first is whatever goals that we want to accomplish in our life, whatever ends that we want to accomplish, all are ends that we love. And it is because we love them that we want to acquire them or accomplish them. This is called Love towards various ends or goals.

8.1.1.2. Love towards Means

Later we find that to accomplish the ends, we have to use various means. Only through the means can we accomplish the ends, and since the means are useful to accomplish the ends, we begin to love the means also. This is because it is useful to accomplish the ends and hence the second direction of our love is love of the means.

8.1.1.3. Love towards oneself

The third thing the object of love is the love of oneself. Everyone loves himself or herself. It is also called self love.

Then the scriptures point out that there is a gradation in the intensity of love in the above three forms of love. Love of the means is the least in its intensity, love of the end is

mediocre and love of oneself is the highest form of love wherein the love has got the highest intensity. The reason is that love of the means is not for the sake of the means itself but for the sake of the end. Once the end is accomplished, then the attitude towards the means is completely different and often not loved. E.g. Rich people are more loved than poor people. That is because the rich are the means to an end called Wealth. And as long as the end called wealth can be accomplished through the rich, they are loved. The moment money goes away from them, thereafter the rich are not loved. Most of the time love for people is love for the means to accomplish the end and often money is the end. Between the love of the end and love for the self, the love of the self is superior. I love various ends hoping that they will give me various comfort safety and happiness. The moment I see that particular end does not give me joy, then the end is either changed, or even after accomplishing the end, it is disposed of.

If we have to grade, Means love is called Manda, End love is called Madhyama and Self love is called Uttama because that is the highest in intensity.

8.1.2. Love towards God

Let us apply this in the field of God. If we have Bhakti or if a person loves God, what will be the intensity of that love ? The scriptures point out, the intensity of the love depends upon how you look upon God.

8.1.2.1. Manda Bhakti – “Dull” (selfish) bhakti

Majority of people look upon God only as the means for various worldly ends. As long as you look upon God to attain means the love is called Manda Bhakti. That is why people get angry with God also. This is a conditional love, and only if the condition is fulfilled will the person love God and if the condition is not fulfilled I reject God.

8.1.2.2. Madhyama Bhakti– Middle bhakti

The next set of people who are still rarer, who look upon God not as means to various ends. They are matured enough, their understanding of God is clearer enough that they are able to choose God as the goal of life. Because they know God represents security, peace happiness. Once I understand God as the symbolic representation of peace, love and happiness then I know that everyone in life is seeking security, happiness and peace alone. And once I know God represents these, I know that God is the end of my life and naturally my love of God is as the end and therefore it is more intense than the previous one. This Bhakti is called Madhyama Bhakti.

8.1.2.3. Uttama Bhakti – Best bhakti

Uttama Bhakti is the even rarer form of love, the most intense form of love in which I look upon God not as the means nor even as the end, but God as non-different from myself. Soham Asmi – means that that Lord is essentially not different from me and therefore the Lord and the Self being identical, God love will become equal to self love.

And since self love is the most intense love, that form of love is called Uttama Bhakti.

For Manda Bhakta God is dear, for Madhyama Bhakta God is dearer and for the Uttama Bhakta God is the dearest. Krishna beautifully elaborates in seventh and twelfth chapter of Gītā. Thus love of God in the form of Manda, Madhyama and Uttama Rūpa is called Bhakti. This is the first meaning of the word Bhakti. Now we will come to the second meaning of the word Bhakti.

8.2. Second Meaning of Bhakti - Course of Discipline

The second meaning is Bhakti as a course of discipline to achieve the spiritual goal, the ultimate goal of liberation. To convey this idea of Bhakti as a course of discipline, generally the word Yoga is added. So when Bhakti means a course of discipline, we use the word Bhakti Yogaha meant for accomplishing the goal. In the Bhagavad Gītā Krishna says

*Māmcha Yovyabhichārena Bhakti Yogena Sevate,
Sagunān Samatītyaitān Bhrahma Bhūyāya Kalpate*

And the 12th chapter of the Gītā is titled Bhakti Yoga itself.

8.2.1. What is Bhakti Yogaha ?

What course of discipline is indicated by the word Bhakti Yogaha. Earlier we dealt with our threefold course of discipline for attaining the Purushārtha – the human goals. We talked about Karma Yoga, Upāsana Yoga and Jnāna Yoga. We never talked about Bhakti Yogaha. So the question is what is then meant by Bhakti Yogaha as a course of discipline ? Is it a fourth Yoga ?

Our answer is Bhakti Yogaha is not an exclusive or separate course of discipline at all. Bhakti is the name of the entire groups of discipline consisting of all the three. It is not a fourth one, but it is the name of the entire threefold course of discipline known as Karma Yoga, Upāsana Yoga and Jnāna Yoga. The first stage of Bhakti Yogaha is Karma Yoga. The second stage of Bhakti Yoga is Upāsana Yoga and the third stage of Bhakti Yoga is Jnāna Yoga.

8.2.2. All encompassing

The next question is why do you call all these three commonly as Bhakti Yogaha ? How come Bhakti Yogaha is the common name for all these three ? Why don't you treat it as a separate fourth Yoga ? Bhakti Yogaha is the common name for all the three because, Bhakti is the common atmosphere in which all these three Yogas are practiced. It is not that Bhakti is separately practiced in a separate time but Karma Yoga, Upāsana Yoga and Jnāna Yoga have to be imbued in Bhakti.

In Karma Yoga, the attitude that one enjoys is dedicating all actions to the Lord and accepting without resistance all the consequences of my actions. Therefore how can there Karma Yoga without Ishvara Arpana Bhāvanā and Prasāda Bhāvanā. Therefore a Karma

Yogi should necessarily have Bhakti all the time because every action is dedicated to the Lord.

In Upāsana Yoga, I have to meditate upon the Lord for developing mental discipline and integration. How can I meditate upon Lord if I don't have Bhakti – these include Mānasa Pūja, Mānasa Pārāyanam, Mānasa Japa. Therefore Upāsana Yoga must also take place in the atmosphere of Bhakti alone.

Jnāna Yoga also involves Bhakti. Before any study of scriptures, we start with a prayer and end with a prayer. In Jnāna Yoga we are enquiring into our own real nature, discovering the identity of our real nature with the nature of God. therefore self realisation or discovery is nothing but God discovery. Therefore Jnāna Yoga also involves Bhakti.

At no time is the person away from Bhakti and all three Yogas put together are called Bhakti Yogaha. This is the second meaning of Bhakti.

8.3. Principle of God

Another topic to be introduced in this context. When we talk of Bhakti, it is love or devotion towards God. Without understanding the principle of God, how can we discuss the topic of devotion ? Because, integral part of love is the object of love. Infact you cannot develop love towards anyone without understanding what it is. How can anyone love an unknown thing or person ? That is why Jnānam of God becomes a necessity.

Scriptures give three definitions of God depending on the maturity of the seeker and the intellectual calibre of the seeker.

8.3.1. Jagat Kartā Īshvara – God as creator of world

First definition for the beginner is – God is the creator of the world. In Sanskrit - Jagat Kartā Īshvara. And we present the simple and easily understandable reasoning – any well designed product, any purposeful well designed product must have an intelligent being to design. And the more well designed the product is, the more you appreciate the designing intelligence. So if the ordinary product requires an intelligent being behind the creation, what to talk of the most wonderful universe which is well designed and very purposeful ? Nothing is purposeless in this creation. If this creation is purposeful and well designed there must be an intelligent creator behind it and that intelligent creator is the Jagat Kartā or Īshvara.

And once I define Īshvara as Jagat Kartā, you will visualise God as a person because we are used to intelligent beings as human beings or persons. Therefore we imagine a very intelligent God who is omniscient, omnipotent, and since we don't see him around safely place him above the clouds. This is Lord as a creator, personal God with a special form as Raama, Krishna, Vishnu or Shiva. This is called Eka Rūpa Īshvara.

8.3.2. Jagat Kāranam Īshvara – God as cause of world

And once you have grown up sufficiently, the scriptures present the next level of Īshvara. God is the cause of the world - Jagat Kāranam Īshvara. Suppose I understand God as the creator of the world, invariably the question comes – what is the raw material out of which the world is created? Nothing else is available because before the creation of the world, God alone was there – none else, even space was not available. That is why scientists say, before Big Bang, we cannot even conceive of time and space. Even before the creation of time and space and objects, when God alone was there, where is the raw material ?

Scriptures point out that God himself happens to be the very material also out of which the world is shaped. God is the Kāranam – the very material out of which the world is created- just as a spider finds the material for the web out of itself. Similarly God is the material cause of the universe and from this the scriptures extend, the raw materials alone becomes the product – manifold products, and since God is the raw material God alone has become the universe. Therefore the whole universe is nothing but God alone. So where is God ? The whole universe is God. Since the whole universe is God, every form I see is the form of God. Hence God does not have one form but all forms are God's forms. So He is no more personal God, He is universal God. He is no more Eka Rūpa Īshvara but is Aneka Rūpa Īshvara or Vishva Rūpa Īshvara and to have to have the Darshanam to God he is available everywhere.

Hence first we said, God created the world, and now we say, God has become the world.

8.3.3. Jagat Adhishthānam Īshvara – God as substratum of world

Once you are ready for the next level, the scriptures give the third definition – Jagat Adhishthānam Īshvara. This is the highest and the toughest and the culmination. In this we say, God did not become the world. This is because the next question will be – Are the ugly things God as well? How can I accept bad also as God ? If such a question comes, you are ready for the third definition.

God does not become the world. God appears as the world with different forms not affected by any form in which he appears. To put the other way around – God is the very substratum of all the forms or the entire creation, which he transcends. God is the ultimate reality, God is the ultimate stuff behind the creation but not affected by them. This is Jagat Adhishthānam Īshvara.

And since God transcends all the superficial forms of the creation, no particular form belongs to God. Therefore that God is Adhishthānam Īshvara is Arūpa Īshvara – formless God.

When I am in the initial stage, I have Eka Rūpa Bhakti. When I am in the middle stage, I have Aneka Rūpa Bhakti. When I am in the final stage my Bhakti is Arūpa Bhakti.

And remember, when we talk about the three stages gradually, the latter ones does not displace the former ones. It only is of a different dimension. The one who has come to Arūpa Bhakti has not lost Eka Rūpa and Aneka Rūpa. Arūpa Bhakti includes the other two. That is why the greatest Advaitin can worship God in any form also. They could happily appreciate Lord as the beautiful nature also and they could transcend both of them and arrive at the formless also. So the higher one does not displace the lower one but adds another dimension. This is the understanding of God that develops in the mind of the seeker as he studies the scriptures.

To consolidate, we have discussed nine forms of Bhakti.

- a) The first three are Manda Bhakti, Madhyama Bhakti and Uttama Bhakti where Bhakti is based on Love of God – Bhāvanā Drushtyā Bhakti Trayam
- b) Then we saw Karma Yoga Rūpa Bhakti, Upāsana Yoga Rūpa Bhakti and Jnāna Yoga Rūpa Bhakti where Bhakti is from the standpoint of Sādhanā - Sādhanā Drushtyā Bhakti Trayam
- c) Then we saw Eka Rūpa Bhakti, Aneka Rūpa Bhakti and Arūpa Bhakti depending on my understanding of God – Devatā Drushtyā Bhakti Trayam

So anytime we talk about Bhakti, we should understand the context and grasp the meaning. And it is a very important topic in the scriptures.

Sunday, 6 April 2008

9. Sādhanā Chatushtaya – Four qualifications

If we look at the book of Tattvabodha, we will see that none of the above topics are covered in Tattvabodha. The textbook Tattvabodha assumes that a student of Tattvabodha knows all the topics that we have already discussed. They are all taken for granted in this particular book. In fact they are implicitly contained in Tattvabodha. Now that we are familiar with these topics, we can enter into Tattvabodha summary proper. Tattvabodha is a book which primarily focuses on Jnāna Yoga spiritual discipline or self enquiry. Unlike the Bhagavad Gītā which is a complete and comprehensive textbook because it deals with Karma Yoga, Upāsana Yoga and Jnāna Yoga, Tattvabodha deals only with Jnāna Yoga.

This book Tattvabodha is generally studied because it presents the method of self enquiry in a systematic and comprehensive form. Self enquiry is presented in a systematic and comprehensive form and this Self enquiry leads to self-knowledge or self discovery. This is the subject matter of Tattvabodha.

Not only does Tattvabodha deal with Self enquiry like other spiritual textbooks, by the way of enquiry, it introduces all the technical terms required for conducting Self enquiry. Any particular science has its own technical terms – called Paribhāshā Shabdāhā in Sanskrit. And you cannot translate certain words. Technical words are required in any

science including Jnāna Yoga. In Tattvabodha all these technical terms are very systematically and comprehensively presented and each one is beautifully defined as well. This Tattvabodha serves two purposes

- It give you the method of enquiry leading to knowledge
- It introduces technical terms or terminologies

This book Tattvabodha is written by Shankarāchārya but not ascertained if it is Ādi Shankarāchārya. And this is a small book only in prose form. Some of the scriptural text are in metrical form (poetry) which can be chanted. but Tattvabodha is in prose form except for the beginning and end. It begins and ends with prayers.

9.1. Qualification for Self enquiry

With this background information, we will enter into the first topic of Tattvabodha. The textbook begins with the qualifications required for Self enquiry. What are the preparatory qualification or preparatory disciplines required for Self enquiry. This is also to be understood very well, because the study of any science presupposes the appropriate qualification. Without appropriate qualification, one cannot enter into any field. This is true of Self enquiry also. This qualification is presented as Sādhana Chatushtaya Sampattihi. Sādhanām means qualification and Chatushtayam means preparation. Hence Sādhana Chatushtaya means fourfold qualification or fourfold preparatory discipline.

The four qualifications mentioned are:

- Vivekaha - discrimination
- Vairāgyam - dispassion
- Mumukshutvam - desire
- Shatka Sampattihi – discipline

9.1.1. Vivekaha – Discrimination

This can be translated into English as discrimination. Here we use the word discrimination not in a negative sense as in racial discrimination, gender discrimination etc. In the negative sense it is used to refer to partiality or favouritism. But in the scriptural jargon the word discrimination is not in the negative sense, here it means the sense of judgement, right judgement, right understanding, discernment.

Now the question is discrimination or separation between what and what ? This is because discrimination always involves two parties. Tattvabodha defines this as Nitya Anitya Vastu Vivekaha – understanding of what is Anityam or impermanent and Nityam or permanent. Therefore differentiation of the impermanent and permanent, differentiation of the ephemeral and eternal is discrimination.

How are we to understand this ? If you look at the universe, we discover one fact that the whole world or creation exists within time - space frame. Therefore no object in the creation is beyond time and space and everything is subject to onslaught of time.

Kālahā Krīdati Gacchati Āyuhu

Onslaught of time, or every object is attacked my time means every object is subject to birth and consequently subject to death also. And since I do not experience anything beyond time, I can say the whole creation is impermanent or ephemeral or perishable in nature. Thus perish-ability or fragility is the intrinsic nature of the entire creation consisting of things, beings, situations and relationships. There is no permanent object, permanent person or permanent situation and above all there is no permanent relationship.

And since the whole world is perishable, it can never give lasting security or support. Nothing in the world or entire world can give me lasting security or support. So if I am going to expect lasting security or support from the world, my expectations are not going to be fulfilled. Disappointment will be the result. Therefore right judgement is – never depend on the world, never rely upon the world for lasting security and support. The world cannot give it – Anitya Vastu cannot give it.

That does not mean that the world is useless or that the world should be rejected. The world can give a lot of things and certainly you can use the world for a lot of things. World can give you entertainment, education, opportunity for service, opportunity for growth. But when it comes to lasting security and support, leaning on the world is risky. That is why we have the example of the cardboard chair. We have beautiful chair of cardboard, we can keep in the showcase. But it cannot be used for sitting down.

Therefore the first wisdom is that the whole world is like a cardboard chair. Don't lean on it. Use it, but don't lean on it. This wisdom is with regards to Anitya Vastu.

And if I want to lean on something, if I want lasting support and security I should turn towards Nitya Vastu and Nitya Vastu alone. This refers to permanent or eternal thing. In Tattvabodha language, it is called Brahman. In religious or Puranic language, it is called God.

Therefore the first lesson is God alone can give permanent security and support. World can give entertainment, education and opportunity. This understanding is called Nitya Anitya Vastu Vivekaha.

9.1.2. Vairāgyam – Dispassion

The second qualification is called Vairāgyam. Vairāgyam is called dispassion. What is meant by passion ? Passion is clinging to the world for security and support. Psychological leaning on the world for security and support is also passion. Using the world for entertainment is not passion. Using the world for education, serving is not passion but leaning on the world for security and support especially psychologically, is called Passion.

And having understood that the world cannot be relied upon for security and support, gradually withdrawing from this world or stopping leaning on the world for security or support is called dispassion. This does not mean running away from the world, nor rejecting but psychologically when I need security and support, I change the channel.

I have both channels, World channel and God Channel. If I want entertainment and education, use the World channel, for security and support change the channel. This changing of the channel when I need security and support is called dispassion. Weaning myself away from the world which is born out of discrimination or understanding. Just like having two chairs – one is made of teak wood and the other is made of cardboard. Use one for decoration and the other for sitting. Use God and Use World appropriately.

9.1.3. Mumukshutvam – Desire (for liberation)

The third qualification is called Desire or Mumukshutvam. This is the desire for Freedom from the problems caused by depending on the world or Anitya Vastu leaning. World dependence causes lot of psychological problems. The first psychological problem is insecurity. This is because I am worried that whatever I am dependant upon will give way. And especially if it involves people, there is a constant worry of rejection. Those people who liked me, will they continue to like me permanently. Insecurity with regards to family or everything else, the basic problem will be insecurity, worry, fear, frustration, disappointment anger, hatred and in fact all psychological problems are cause by depending on the un-dependable, relying on the un-reliable. It is not the problem with the Anitya Vastu, but it is my mistake that I expected permanence out of impermanence. Wrong expectations are the problems. And the problems caused by the wrong expectations or dependences are called Samsāraha. Mumukshutvam means strong desire to be free from this Samsāraha .

If this desire is not there, a person will travel from one impermanent thing to another impermanent thing, and again be cheated and frustrated. So when the person wants to get out of this mess, this is called desire for freedom or Mumukshutvam.

9.1.4. Shatka Sampattihi – Sixfold discipline

The fourth qualification is called discipline or Shatka Sampattihi. Shatka means sixfold. Hence Shatka Sampattihi means sixfold inner discipline or personal discipline, self management before trying to manage others like the family, the company or the nation. And the six disciples are enumerated.

9.1.4.1. Shamaha – Tranquility

This means tranquillity and mastery of the mind or mind control in simple language

9.1.4.2. Damaha – Sense-control

Tranquillity and mastery of sense organs. Sensory discipline or sense control

9.1.4.3. Upamaha – Introspectiveness

Reduction of extrovert activities so that one will get some quality time for Self enquiry. Relaxed and stress-free pursuit. Finding quality time for withdrawal.

9.1.4.4. Titikshā – Forbearance

Means mental toughness to withstand all forms of challenges in life. To face all types of experiences in life and this is also called psychological immunity in ups and downs. This is also called forbearance. This is an important word that has many shades of meanings. In this case we use the meaning of inner strength

9.1.4.5. Shraddhā – Trust

Shraddhā means faith in the scriptures and also the Guru or Āchārya who helps in the study of the scriptures. By faith we do not mean blind faith but an open mindedness until I understand things clearly – hence a non-critical open minded approach giving the benefit of the doubt to the teacher or the scriptures until I understand. That humility, Shraddhā involves freedom from intellectual arrogance. Intellectual arrogance is a very big obstacle for scriptural studies.

9.1.4.6. Samādhānam – Concentration

This means focussing capacity. The capacity to focus on the goal that I have undertaken. If it involves listening to a talk, my mind must be focussed on it for at least an hour. So concentration or focussing is that this refers.

The above are the sixfold discipline and all the above make up one qualification. All the four qualifications put together make up Sādhana Chatushtayam and this is the pre-requisite for Self enquiry. Tattvabodha begins with this statement only.

The one who has got these four – at least 10 – 15 % - is called Adhikāri and he or she can alone benefit fully from Self enquiry, for others it will appear irrelevant or a waste of time or will merely appear as an academic exercise.

9.2. Becoming an Adhikāri [qualified student]

The author of this text points out that Sādhana Chatushtayam is required but he never says how to acquire them. Many things are taken for granted. Naturally if he says that the fourfold qualification are required and I will look into myself and I find myself to be an Anadhikāri, what am I supposed to do to become an Adhikāri ? We have to find the answers ourselves and the methods are as follows

The first three qualifications discrimination, dispassion and desire are acquired and nourished by Karma Yoga discipline. Karma Yoga is the most important discipline meant for acquiring the first three qualifications.

The fourth qualification Shama Ādi Shatka Sampattihi. The fourth qualification is acquired through Upāsana Yogaha. Hence Karma Yoga and Upāsana Yoga together will give Sādhana Chatushtaya Sampattihi with is preparation for Jnāna Yoga. Karma Yoga and Upāsana Yoga will make you fit for Jnāna Yoga. Hence Karma Yoga and Upāsana Yoga gives you Jnāna Yogyatā. Jnāna Yoga gives us Jnānam. And Jnānam gives you Mokshaha.

Therefore our entire spiritual discipline can be divided into two stages now. First stage is Jnāna Yogyatā Prāptiḥ – acquisition of Jnāna Yogyatā. This involves pursuit of Karma and Upāsana Yoga. And the second and final stage of life is acquisition of Jnānam – Jnāna Prāptiḥ.

In the scriptures the first stage of Jnāna Yogyatā Prāptiḥ is discussed in the first part of the scriptures – Veda Pūrva deals with Jnāna Yogyatā Prāptiḥ through Karma and Upāsana Yoga. This portion is also called Karma Kāṇḍam or religious portion. The entire religious portion or beginning portion of the scriptures known as Veda Pūrva deals with Jnāna Yogyatā Prāptiḥ through Karma and Upāsana.

Whereas the last portion called Veda Antaha deals with Jnāna Prāptiḥ or the attainment of Jnānam through Jnāna Yoga. And this is not religious portion but is the philosophical portion of the scriptures. Thus the scriptures have got a religious portion dealing with religious life for Jnāna Yogyatā and a Philosophical portion for a philosophical life which is meant for Jnāna Prāptiḥ. Veda Pūrva and Veda Antaha – Vedānta is also known as Upanishad. That is because Vedānta puts an end to all the problems born out of wrong expectation. Upanishad means destroyer of dependence caused problems.

9.3. Ten “Commandments” - Yama / Niyama

Finally we will discuss one more aspect. We saw Karma Yoga gives the first three qualifications (Discrimination, dispassion and desire) and Upāsana Yoga gives the last qualification (discipline). In addition to Karma Yoga and Upāsana Yoga, one more exercise is included for acquiring Sādhana Chatuṣṭaya Sampattiḥ. Karma Yoga and Upāsana Yoga are not sufficient. One more is important – that is an ethical life in which a person follows moral values. A life of moral values is extremely important for cultivating Sādhana Chatuṣṭayam. Mere Karma Yoga and mere Upāsana Yoga are not enough. Morality ethical values are also important.

What are the ethical values. There are many ethical values highlighted throughout the scriptures. Of them, ten values are important. Without them, Sādhana Chatuṣṭaya is impossible and without Sādhana Chatuṣṭaya, Jnāna Yoga is impossible and without Jnāna Yoga, Jnānam is impossible and without Jnānam, Moksha is impossible and without Moksha freedom is not possible. Without Freedom, you will then be a psychological slave of worries and tension etc. The ten “commandments” are divided into two groups.

9.3.1. Five to avoid

The first group consisting of five values in which you avoid five things.

9.3.1.1. Himsā Varjanam – Non-violence

First one is called Himsā Varjanam. Varjanam means avoidance. Himsā means violence. Avoidance of all forms of violence, physical verbal and even mental violence. And if you think that violence of two nature, avoidable and unavoidable violence, the scriptures

say avoid the avoidable violence and do Prāyaschittam for the unavoidable violence. And Prāyaschittam is always Pancha Mahā Yajnāha. In simple terms it is called Ahimsā

9.3.1.2. Asatya Varjanam – Non-lying

The second avoidance is Asatya Varjanam. Avoidance of lying. Anruta Varjanam – falsehood avoidance. Never lie. Here also if you divide the lie into two – avoid all avoidable lies and all unavoidable lies should be followed by Prāyaschittam which is again Pancha Mahā Yajnāha. Even the scriptures says

Pancha Sūna Grihasthasya Pancha Yajnena Nashyati

Sūna means unavoidable evil. And a householder will face many such problems and for him, Prāyaschittam is presented.

9.3.1.3. Steyam Varjanam – Non-stealing

The third one is Steyam Varjanam – Asteyam. Avoidance of stealing. Any illegitimate possession comes under stealing. Any benefit I acquire through an illegitimate deal is stealing only.

9.3.1.4. Maithuna Varjanam – Inappropriate sex

Then comes Maithuna Varjanam. Maithunam means inappropriate sexual relationship in thought, words and deed. Varjanam means avoidance.

9.3.1.5. Parigraha Varjanam – Non-possessiveness

The fifth one is Parigraha Varjanam. Avoidance of over possession, hoarding, amassing etc. To put in positive language, simple living to the extent possible. And if I have more, sharing with others,

The above are the five avoidances.

9.3.2. Five to be followed

Then there are five positive things to be followed.

9.3.2.1. Shaucham – cleanliness

The first is Shaucham – means purity. Outside and inside (thoughts) purity

9.3.2.2. Santoshaha – Contentment

The second is Santoshaha – means positive contentment with whatever I acquire through legitimate methods. This does not mean neutrality saying “OK fine”. I am happy.

*Yat Labhase Nija Karmopattam
Vittam Tena Vinodaya Chittam*

9.3.2.3. Tapaha – Self-denial

The third is Tapaha or Tapas. Any self denial practiced for master over one's own instrument. E,g, fasting, maunam – any vow taken where I deny certain comforts for self mastery. Tapas is austerity or self denial.

9.3.2.4. Svādhyāyaha – Scriptural study

The fourth is Svādhyāyaha – scriptural study is very important.

9.3.2.5. Pranidhānam –Surrender to Lord

The fifth Īshvara Pranidhānam – surrender to the Lord by which accepting every experience as a Karma Phalam which is coming as a gift from God. Without resistance accepting every experience and not allowing the experience to generate negative emotion. That acceptance is called surrender to God.

These are the five positive ones. The first five are called Yamaha. The second five are called Niyamaha. Yama + Niyama are the ten commandments which is the moral or ethical life. Karma Yoga + Upāsana Yoga + Ethical life will give Sādhanā Chatushtaya. If we have this, we are ready to go into Tattvabodha.

Monday, 7 April 2008

10. Sharīra Trayam – Three bodies

We are seeing the technical terms used in all our scriptures which have been comprehensively presented in the small book called Tattvabodha. Not only does it give the essence of Vedāntik teaching, but also systematically introduces the technical terms. In Sanskrit a technical term is called a Paribhāshā Shabdaha. We are seeing the Paribhāshā Shabda of the scriptures. Paribhāshā mean technical and Shabdaha means term.

In the last session, we introduced the technical term – Sādhanā Chatushtayam. Sādhanā means qualification and Chatushtayam means fourfold. We also saw what those four qualification are and how they have to be acquired. These qualifications are meant for gaining self-knowledge which will lead to a person's liberation or freedom.

Today we propose to introduce the next technical word used in the Shāstrams and that is the Sharīra Trayam. Sharīra Trayam means the threefold bodies of an individual. Sharīram means body and Trayam means threefold. Sharīram is otherwise known as Dehaha. Therefore we can also say Deha Trayam. We will take each one of the three bodies and analyse.

The three bodies enumerated are:

- Sthūla Sharīram or Sthūla Dehaha : In English this is called Gross Body
- Sūkshma Sharīram or Sūkshma Dehaha : In English this is called subtle body
- Kārana Sharīram or Kārana Dehaha : In English this is called Causal Body.

While analysing the above we are going to take four factors associated with each one of the above. The four factors are:

- Material out of which each body is made – the raw material which we always see
- Components of each body – the parts that make up the particular body
- Function of each body
- Nature of each body

10.1. Sthūla Sharīram – Gross Body

Let us first take up the Sthūla Sharīram first and we will go in the order of four factors – the material, the components, the function and the nature.

10.1.1. Material

What is the material out of which the Sthūla Sharīram is made ? The Shāstrams point out and we also know that the gross body is made out of gross matter which is in the form of the five gross elements. In the scriptures, matter is divided into five elements basically:

- Ākāshaha or space
- Vāyu or air
- Agni or fire
- Jalam or waters
- Prithivi or the earth

So the gross body or Sthūla Sharīram is made up of gross matter in the form of gross five elements. In Sanskrit the gross five elements are called Sthūla Pancha Bhūtāni. And this is easily proved by our experience because the body has earth it has solid stuff, body has got plenty of water which alone give shape, Body has Agni in the form of temperature 98.7, Body has got Vāyu in the form of life-breath and body has got Ākāshaha or space occupied by the body.

So gross matter is the material out of which the body is made. And since it is made out of Sthūla Bhūtāni (elements), the body is called Bhautika Sharīram. Bhautikam means born out of Bhūtāni, Bhūtāni means gross elements. This is the material side.

10.1.2. Components

The next factor with regards to the body is the components of the body. Of course the body has got innumerable components. If we get into the details it will become the science of anatomy. For the sake of convenience, the Shāstrams divide the body into four components

- Central Body – Ātmā
- Head – Shira
- Hands – Paksha
- Legs – Puccha

This Shira Paksha Puccha Ātmā is according to the Tattiriya Upanishad. These are the four classifications. These are the four components of the Sthūla Sharīram.

10.1.3. Function

The scriptures point out that the body is only a temporary residence used by the individual. The gross body is only a house for a lease. And what is the payment ? The payment is in the form of Karma – Punya Pāpa Karma. And as long as the payment is available, the tenement is available and afterwards the notice will come you will have to vacate.

Therefore the body is a temporary residence. In Sanskrit, Tattvabodha uses the word Āyatanam. And residing in the body alone, we do all the transactions with the world. In fact before starting the transactions, we fix up a residence. And remaining there alone, we can operate.

10.1.4. Nature

Firstly, the body is of a changing nature. It is subject to modification. In Sanskrit it is called Savikāram. Vikāraha means modification and Savikāraha means with modification. Firstly, the change in the gross body is classified into six Shat Vikarāhā:

10.1.4.1. Shat Vikarāhā – Six Conditions

- Asti - The first condition is the potential existence in the womb of the mother. A baby is there inside
- Jāyate - This the next change – or birth
- Vardhate - once the body is born, it starts growing
- Viparinamate - Metamorphosing i.e. growth has stopped but modification or changes continue. After the body has become an adult body, remaining an adult, it undergoes various modifications. To visualise as a graph, the graph initially goes upwards and thereafter it is the same.
- Apakshīyate - Decay or ageing, growing old
- Nāshaha or Maranam - Death of the body after which we cannot keep the body for long time.

All the above put together are called Shat Vikāravat Sharīram.

10.1.4.2. Visibility

The second nature of the body is that it is visible for both oneself and others. My gross body I can also tangibly experience and see and my gross body can also be experienced, touched and seen. Hence the gross body is evident to oneself and others. In fact that is the reason it is called gross. Objectively available for all the people.

10.1.4.3. Longevity

The third nature of the body is that it has got a duration of life. One cannot extend beyond

In fact the very word Sharīram means Shīryamāna Svabhāvam - that which is subject to constant change and decay. Even the word Deha is derived from the root Dih – Upachaya Apachaye Dih Dhātuḥ – that which is subject to expansion and contraction.

10.2. Sūkshma Sharīram – Subtle Body

The second body is called Sūkshma Sharīram or subtle body. This also has four factors which we have to see.

10.2.1. Material

Scriptures point out that the subtle body is born out of subtle matter which consists of subtle five elements. Just as there are gross five elements, there are subtle five elements called Sūkshma Bhūtāni:

- Subtle Space
- Subtle Air
- Subtle Fire
- Subtle Water
- Subtle Earth

In general made out of subtle matter and subtle body is also called Bhoutika Sharīram. It is material body and material in nature.

10.2.2. Components

Scriptures point out that the subtle body has got nineteen components. Each one being one instrument of transaction. Because gross body is only the office, but we require instruments for transaction and we have nineteen instruments:

10.2.2.1. Pancha Jnāna Indriyāni – Five Sense-organs

These are the five sense organs of knowledge – because all transactions presuppose knowledge.

- Eyes – meant to gather the knowledge of colours and forms. Rūpa Grāhaka Chakshur Indriyam
- Ears – meant to gather the knowledge of the sounds. Shabda Grāhaka Shrotro Indriyam
- Nose – meant to gather the knowledge of all forms of smell. Gandha Grāhaka Ghrāna Indriyam
- Tongue – meant to gather the knowledge of all forms of taste. Rasa Grāhaka Rasana

Indriyam

- Skin – meant to gather the knowledge of all form varieties of touch. Sparsha Grāhaka Tuvag Indriyam

These are the five Jnāna Indriyāni. You should be careful that when we refer to the Jnāna Indriyāni or sense organs, we don't refer to the physical part which belongs to the physical body. But we actually refer to the subtle power of perception. The eyeball belongs to the physical body but the eye organ belongs to the subtle body. Similarly the ear lobe belongs to the gross body but the power of hearing – the Shravana Shakti – belongs to the subtle body.

10.2.2.2. Pancha Karma Indriyāni — Five Organs of Action

These are five sense organs of action. So one is meant for input and receiving the stimuli (the previous one) and one is meant for output or expressing our responses (this one).

- Organ of speech – Vāg Indriyam. Verbal response.
- Organ of Hands – Pāni by which we do varieties of action.
- Organ of Legs – Pāda by which we move from place to place. Organs of locomotion.

There is a beautiful coordination between Jnāna Indriyam and Karma Indriyam. The ears want to listen to the class then immediately the legs bring the body.

- Organ of evacuation - Pāyuhu – wastage removing organs.
- Organ of Procreation - Upastham – organ of reproduction because of which alone the species continues as a lineage.

10.2.2.3. Pancha Prānāhā – Five-fold Energy-functions

The fivefold Prānāhā. The energy generating system or fuel-converting system. If you have to keep on acting, we have to generate energy constantly. We have Prāna Shakti behind the organs of action. Prāna Shakti lends energy. There are fivefold Prānas well known as:

- Respiratory system - **Prāna** – inhalation and exhalation which alone has to absorb the Prāna Shakti or oxygen. Then the Carbon dioxide has to go out, oxygen has to go to lungs, blood has to absorb and it has to be circulated.
- Evacuating system – **Apāna** – energy behind functioning of the evacuation system or waste removal. Any form of removal of waste can be called Apāna.
- Circulatory system - **Vyāna** – oxygen has to be circulated, the nutrition that is generated in the stomach has to be carried to all parts of the body.
- Digestive system - **Samānaha** – this converts various eaten food into various nutrients – carbohydrates, proteins, fats, salts, minerals etc.

- **Udānaha** – means the reversing system which operates at the time of death generally when all the processes are reversed because it is time for dying. Digestive system weakens, respiratory system weakens. Also this reversal functions during emergency – normally the food has to go down, but if some toxic substance is there, then the normal process of going inside is reversed and things are thrown out.

They are the life-giving ones and function behind the Karma Indriyāni giving energy to the Karma Indriyāni. That is why on a fasting, no Karma Indriyam will function properly because you are weakened and hence you cannot walk properly, talk properly etc.

That is why we chant the prayer

Om Prānāya Svāhā

Om Apānāya Svāhā

Om Vyānāya Svāhā

Om Udānāya Svāhā

Om Samānāya Svāhā

10.2.2.4. Chatvāri Antaha Karanāni – Fourfold Internal Organs

These are fourfold internal organs.

- **Manaha** or Mind : stands for all forms of emotional faculty. Roughly can be translated as the emotional faculty and also the doubting faculty. Sankalpa Vikalpātmakam Manaha – should I do this or should I do that? To be or not to be.
- **Buddhihi** or intellect : Rational faculty or judging faculty or the discriminating faculty or the knowing faculty or the weighing faculty or Reasoning Faculty.
- **Chittam** or Memory : to receive or to record our experiences in our mind. This records all the five of Shabda, Sparsha Rūpa, Rasa and Gandha. According to Shāstram, we can remember not only the past of this life but the past of our past lives as well. Without knowing the details sometimes, we feel that something is already known. A musical prodigy feels that he knows the music already, a spiritual prodigy feels, he knows the scriptures before.
- **Ahankāra** or Ego : the faculty of self-reference. Reflexive faculty which is well developed in a human beings. Animals are not that self-conscious regarding their status or pedigree. Aham Karanam Ahankāra – that which refers to myself is called Ahankāra.

These four together are called Chatvāri Antaha Karanāni.

The above are the components of Sūkshma Sharīram.

10.2.3. Function

The function is transactions. All forms of transactions are done by the Sūkshma Sharīram with the help of these 19 instruments. Some instruments are meant for input and

some for output and some for both (e.g. mouth)

10.2.4. Nature

There are two components under the Sūkshma Sharīram's nature

10.2.4.1. Change

This is also subject to change. So they improve and sometimes weaken. Eyes become poor, memory fails, intellect is dull. So change is one feature and the next feature

10.2.4.2. Longevity

This Sūkshma Sharīram has got a longer life compared to the gross body. Gross body lives only for a maximum of about 100 years, but the subtle body continues in the next janma as well. Bodies and bodies are changed whereas the mind continues. That is why we are able to remember or get the benefit of the past Janma because the body has changed but the Sūkshma Sharīram continues. And it goes upto Pralayam and only during Pralayam is the Sūkshma Sharīram dismantled.

10.2.5. Visibility

Sūkshma Sharīram is evident and recognisable only for oneself and it is not available for others. What is my mind, I know, what are my feelings I know, but you are not able to see my mind or know my feelings or my memory. Because it is available only for me and not for others, it is called subtle body – not concrete like gross body.

10.3. Kārana Sharīram – Causal Body

Kārana Sharīram is also called the causal body.

10.3.1. Material

The material out of which this is made is called causal matter. The subtlest form of matter. Technically it is called Avidya. Normally Avidya means ignorance, but in this context it is different. Sometimes the word Prakriti or Māyā is also used.

10.3.2. Components

The components or Kārana Sharīram are nothing but Sthūla Sharīram and Sūkshma Sharīram when they are in subtle or potential form before they were created. Hence Kārana Sharīram consists of Sthūla Sharīram and Sūkshma Sharīram in seed form before they were created hence before the origination of the world and before the origination of creation or Pralaya Kāle. Sthūla Sharīram was not there then Sūkshma Sharīram was not there then as it is available now. But Sthūla Sharīram and Sūkshma Sharīram existed in seed form.

This is like a tree a few years ago was not available in this form. 20 years ago this tree

was there but in potential form or unmanifest form. This is because tree cannot come without a seed because of law of conservation of matter – matter can never be produced or destroyed. Matter always exists. That being so, before the creation also, Sthūla Sharīram and Sūkshma Sharīram must have existed in potential form. That potential form of the two bodies is called Kārana Sharīram.

And Kārana Sharīram evolves into Sthūla Sharīram and Sūkshma Sharīram, just as a seed evolves into tree.

10.3.3. Functions

It serves as the receptacle or ground or source from which these two bodies arise. And the two bodies will ultimately resolve into Kārana Sharīram. Things come into manifestation from unmanifest condition. Then the manifest, when they are destroyed, they will not disappear as matter can never be destroyed. When destroyed, they actually go back to unmanifest form. In scientific language, matter destroyed becomes energy. Energy is unmanifest matter. Energy again condenses into matter. Stars explode to become energy, energy condenses to form stars. In the universe, stars are constantly formed and destroyed. Stars are converted into energy and energy is reconverted into matter by the law of inter-convertibility of matter and energy. In Shāstram it is called inter-convertibility of manifest and un-manifest matter.

From causal matter, subtle and gross matter arise. From subtle and gross matter, again causal matter conversion takes place. Hence the function is that the causal matter or Kārana Sharīram serves as the store house for receiving the two Sharīram and again in the next Srishti throwing the two Sharīrams.

Hence during Srishti out of Kārana Sharīram will arise Sthūla Sharīram and Sūkshma Sharīram. During Pralayam out of Sthūla Sharīram and Sūkshma Sharīram will go back to Kārana Sharīram.

10.3.4. Nature

Kārana Sharīram has got the longest life compared to even Sūkshma Sharīram. Sūkshma Sharīram gets dismantled during Pralayam at least. Pralayam refers to the resolution of the whole universe. Whereas Kārana Sharīram will not be destroyed even during Pralayam. It is supposed to go away only at the time of liberation. It has the longest life.

Sthūla Sharīram is available for all the people. Sūkshma Sharīram is evident for me only and not for others. Kārana Sharīram is not evident to even me and others. It is un-evident and un-decipherable for anyone. Hence this is called Nirvikalpa Svarūpam – indistinguishable.

Every individual has got Sthūla Sharīram, Sūkshma Sharīram and Kārana Sharīram.

Friday, 11 April 2008

11. Avasthā Trayam and Kosha Panchakam

Avasthā Trayam refers to the three stages of experience and Kosha Panchakam refers to the five **layers** of our personality.

11.1. Avasthā Trayam – Three States of experience

We will first start with Avasthā Trayam – the three states of experience. We will see three factors relating to each state of experience. By studying the three factors, we will understand what these three states of experience are.

- First we will study the condition of the mind in each state of experience because the mind plays a prominent role in each state.
- Secondly we will study the nature of the experience. In each state of experience, what is the nature of experience.
- Finally we will study the dominant medium which is involved or connected with each state of experience.

11.1.1. Jāgrat Avasthā – Waking State

This refers to waking state of experience. Avasthā means a state of experience and Jāgrat Avasthā means waking state of experience. Now in this state of experience, first we will find the condition of the mind or to be precise, the internal organs – Antah Karanam

11.1.1.1. Mind

In the waking state, the mind or the inner organ is fully functional or operative which means that all faculties are functioning – the emotional, rational, thinking, ego, memory faculties are all functioning and open. This is also called Pūrṇa Vikāśaha – fully bloomed is the internal organ. And since all these four faculties are functional, all these four experiences will also be there – emotions, thinking, discrimination, gathering fresh knowledge, gathering fresh experience.

11.1.1.2. Nature

The second factor to study is the nature of experience in Jāgrat Avasthā. In Jāgrat Avasthā we experience a world which is external to ourselves, our body-mind complex. It is a Bāhya Prapancha.

And since it is an external universe, it is a concrete tangible world of experience. We can very clearly tangibly feel it because it is made out of tangible matter. Therefore it is external, it is concrete and is available for all other people also.

It is a common public world and hence is an objective experience. We will know the significance of each adjective when we compare with dream experience. Here objective

means – commonly available for all people.

This experience is sense-organ based Indriya Janyam. In Jāgrat Avasthā, I experience the world with the help of the sense organs in the form of Shabda, Sparsha, Rūpa, Rasa and Gandha and the consequent pleasure and pain and other responses.

So the four adjectives to be remembered are:

- External,
- Concrete,
- Objective and
- Sense Organ-

... based experience. This experience involves both ways of transaction. The transaction involves receiving experience - Bhoga Pradhāna - and it involves responding to the world. I function both as a Bhokta as well as a Kartā – receiver and contributor.

In Shāstram it is called Bhoga Bhūmi and Karma Bhūmi.

11.1.1.3. Medium

The dominant medium involved in the waking state. To experience the waking state, we are making use of the sense organs. This is a sense-organ based experience. And, to use the sense organs, we require a physical body because every sense organ has a physical location.

In the Shāstram, the physical location is called Golakam. Every Indriyam requires a Golakam, the physical part. The eye sense-organ requires the eye Golakam the physical part, the ear sense-organ require the ear Golakam. The sense-organ belongs to Sūkshma Sharīram and the Golakam belongs to the Sthūla Sharīram. Thus the sense organs which belong to Sūkshma Sharīram require the physical body which has got the physical location or Golakam.

Sense organs require Golakam. Golakams require the physical body. Therefore sense organs require the physical body for functioning. Since the Jāgrat Avasthā is sense organ based, Jāgrat Avasthā is heavily physical body oriented. Therefore we say, Jāgrat Avasthā is Sthūla Sharīram Pradhāna Avasthā. Because I have to see an external world or seeing an external world I have to operate sense organs, to operate sense organs I require the body. Therefore without the physical body, the physical universe cannot be experienced.

11.1.2. Svapna Avasthā – Dream State

This is also called the Dream state of experience. In Sanskrit it is called Svapna Avasthā. And with regard to Svapna Avasthā also, we have to see the three factors.

11.1.2.1. Mind

During Svapna or dream, our memory faculty alone is functioning. Whatever experiences we have been gathering in the Jāgrat Avasthā, they all get registered in the

memory-slab of the mind. In Jāgrat Avasthā, the mind is similar to a recorder of Shabda, Sparsha, Rūpa, Rasa and Gandha. Not only can it register the physical world, but also the emotions like sorrow and happiness are registered. That part of the mind is called Chittam faculty. And whatever is registered is thrown out again and functions as a Video Cassette Player. Therefore whatever emotions we experience in dream, are not freshly received emotions but are only replaying the recorded emotions. Therefore everything that happens in dream is only from memory. Therefore the other faculties are not functioning:

- The Manaha or emotional faculty for gathering fresh emotions
- rational faculty does not function
- Ego faculty does not function. Even the Ego experienced in the dream is the memory-ego and the fresh ego is not functioning.

Therefore the condition of the mind during dream is: partially functioning mind. Of the four faculties, only one faculty is functioning and this being Chittam or memory. Hence Svapna Avasthā is also called Ardha Vikāsaha.

11.1.2.2. Nature

In dream, we experience a world which is internal. Because this world is generated out of my own personal private memory and therefore it is not something existing outside, there is no connection between the dream objects that I have and the surroundings that I have. I may be sleeping in a place but my dreams may be connected to another place. Therefore it is an internal world.

Secondly since it is an internal world, made out of our own memory, we called it Vasana Māyā Prapanchaha. It is made out of our memories or thoughts. Hence they are not concrete or are abstract. The external world is Bhautika Prapanchaha and therefore concrete. Internal world is Vāsanā Maya Prapanchaha and therefore abstract. Thoughts are not tangible and therefore thought-generated object is also not tangible.

In dreams the world available for me is not accessible to other people. This is a subjective universe.

It is not perceived with sense organs – not a sense organ based universe. This is a memory based universe or Vāsanā Janyam. Hence whatever we experience in dream is based on our experience in waking only. Whatever we can see through the VCP is only what has been recorded by a VCR. If you collect experiences in Jāgrat Avasthā, in Svapna Avasthā, you recollect the experiences. You cannot recollect when you have not collected in first place. Therefore every Svapna experience is based on Jāgrat Avasthā.

Sometimes we may get a doubt – sometimes I experience a rare dream that I have not experienced in the waking state. If you say so, there are only a few possibilities:

- One is you create a new dream by combining various things experienced in the Jāgrat Avasthā. New objects cannot be created. This is because objects are memory-based

- or thought-based, and thought being highly fluid the objects are highly fluid in Svapna – Avyaktam Padārthaha. Therefore since they all get jumbled up, we get mixed dreams.
- Sometimes whatever we imagine in the Jāgrat Avasthā, they get registered and they can be thrown out. Whatever is fantasised or imagined or read in books or seen in movies leading to imagination, they all can come in Svapna.
 - Sometimes even if I have not experienced in this Janma , according to our Shāstram, the experience of the previous Janma also can come. Because between the previous Janma and this Janma, the physical body alone is difference – the subtle body continues. Therefore sometimes it is said, that children without any reason suddenly laugh or suddenly cry. And this is generally attributed to previous Janma memories. The present Janma memories have not yet started strongly forming – hence Pūrva Janma Smaranam comes they say. This cannot be verified.
 - Suppose a person says that he gets experiences which are connected to the future – premonition or ESP-type of experience relating to the future event. You cannot say it is a past experience. Therefore it cannot be Vāsanā-based, it cannot be memory-based which require past experiences. We say, by definition they are not Svapnāhā – Svapnāhā experiences are purely memory-based. If a person sees future events, it is only a unique faculty of the mind which we have not developed, because coming events cast their shadows before. Any event is already there in potential form. When it is potential, it is too subtle for us to understand. But if the mind is sensitised enough, as we have in the Purānās Trikāa Jnānis, the mind has got this unique faculty. The Yogic people deliberately develop this faculty. But in our case, it sometimes happens as a freak experience.

11.1.2.3. Medium

Since Svapna is memory-based and memories belong to the Chittam and Chittam belongs to Sūkshma Sharīram, Svapna is predominantly Sūkshma Sharīram based. Hence it is called Sūkshma Sharīram Pradhāna Avasthā Svapna Avasthā.

11.1.3. Sushupti Avasthā – Dreamless Sleep

The third state is the state of sleep. Sometimes this is translated as Deep Sleep to indicate a dreamless sleep. In Sanskrit we call this Sushupti Avasthā.

11.1.3.1. Mind

Unlike Jāgrat Avasthā and Svapna where the mind was Pūrva Vikāsaha and Ardha Vikāsaha [fully functional and half-functional] respectively, in Sushupti Avasthā the mind is fully non-functional and almost zero functional. That is why since emotional faculty is not there in sleep, emotions are not there, since rational faculty is not there, no knowledge, and since memory faculty is not functioning, no memory, and since Ego faculty is not functioning, there is not even the sense of I am sleeping. All these are dormant.

11.1.3.2. Nature

Since sense-organs are not functioning, the external world is not there.

Since memories are not functioning, internal world is not there.

Therefore there is neither external concrete objective world nor internal abstract subjective world. Therefore it is an experience of blankness. We call it as Ajnāna Anubhavaha – state of total ignorance or blackout or blankness. This is the nature of the experience.

11.1.3.3. Medium

The dominant medium is to be seen now.

Sthūla Sharīram is not dominantly functioning because sense organs are not functioning.

Sūkshma Sharīram is not dominantly functioning because memories are not thrown out. Therefore what is dominant is the Kāraṇa Sharīram Pradhāna Avasthā. A state in which Kāraṇa Sharīram is dominant when Sthūla Sharīram and Sūkshma Sharīram are as though resolved because they are not functional. Whatever is not functioning is as good as resolved.

During Kāraṇa Sharīram Pradhāna Avasthā, all our internal and external experiences remain in dormant condition and from that alone they will come back the next day.

Hence to summarise, when I am associated with Jāgrat Avasthā, I am called the Waker. When associated with Svapna Avasthā, I am called Dreamer. When associated with Sushupti Avasthā I am called a sleeper. In Shāstram, three words are used:

- Vishva is the name of the waker. Vishva means fully as the mind is fully functional.
- Taijasaha – Internally illumined person or the dreamer
- Prājñaha - sleeper or blissfully ignorant person. Prakarshena Ajnaha Prājñaha

The above was Avasthā Trayam

11.2. Kosha Panchakam – Five Layers

Now we will see the fivefold personality layers. This Kosha Panchakam is the division of Sharīra Trayam itself in another manner. The three bodies which we discussed in Sharīra Trayam, the same three bodies are divided into five layers. The personality is the same but but the angle of division varies. When you divide into three bodies, it is based on the matter:

- Sthūla Sharīram is made out of raw matter
- Sūkshma Sharīram is made out of subtle matter
- Kāraṇa Sharīram is made out of causal matter.

Matter-based division is Sharīra Trayam.

This texture-based classification is Sharīra Trayam.

But the very same three are divided into five, based on functions. Functional division is Kosha Panchakam. In this, Sthūla Sharīram is seen as one particular Kosha called Annamaya Kosha. The physical body is termed Annamaya Kosha. Kāraṇa Sharīram is called Ānandamaya Kosha and also has not got sub-divisions.

The middle Sharīram, the Sūkshma Sharīram alone is subdivided into three Koshas known as:

- Prānamaya Kosha
- Manomaya Kosha
- Vijnānamaya Kosha

11.2.1. Annamaya Kosha – Food layer (Anatomical system)

Annamaya Kosha or the Sthūla Sharīram can be termed as our anatomical system. The anatomy of the body is called Annamaya Kosha. The structure of the body, the organs of the physical part, the limbs of the body is called Annamaya Kosha. It is so called because it is born out of and nourished out of the essence of Annam or food.

11.2.2. Prānamaya Kosha – Energy layer (Physiological system)

This corresponds to the physiological system. This means the functions of the anatomy. Anatomy refers to the various parts of the body. Physiology deals with the functions. So Prānamaya Kosha refers to the functions. That is why at the time of death, the Sūkshma Sharīram is supposed to leave the body, which means that three Koshas leave the body. These are:

- Prānamaya Kosha
- Manomaya Kosha
- Vijnānamaya Kosha

...and these leave the body. Since the Prānamaya Kosha has left the body, the physiological systems are not there while the anatomy is there. Hence organ transplantation is possible. Anatomy belongs to Sthūla Sharīram and it remains even after death. Physical belongs to Sūkshma Sharīram or Prānamaya Kosha and therefore it disappears after death. This Prānamaya Kosha is otherwise called Kriyā Shakti and consists of ten organs of Sūkshma Sharīram or Prānamaya Kosha.

Those ten organs are:

- Pancha Prānāhā : giving energy
- Pancha Karma Indriyāni : giving the tools.

Hence Energy + Tools = Kriyā Shakti.

11.2.3. Manomaya Kosha – Mind layer (Psychological function)

Can be termed as the psychological function. All the emotions, doubts is Manomaya Kosha or psychological personality or Iccha Shakti. Kriyā Shakti is preceded by Iccha

Shakti because desire alone prompts a person to action. Therefore Manomaya Kosha pushes Prānamaya Kosha into action. This psychological personality otherwise called Manomaya Kosha consists of six organs.

The six organs include:

- Pancha Jnāna Indriyāni or Five sense organs of knowledge
- Mind or Manaha which includes Chittam and Ahankāra

11.2.4. Vijnānamaya Kosha – Intellect layer (Knowing personality)

It is the cognitive personality or the knowing personality. While Manomaya Kosha corresponds to emotions or Iccha Shakti, this Vijnānamaya Kosha refer to knowing personality or Jnāna Shakti – cognitive personality or judging personality or weighing personality.

In other words, Vijnānamaya Kosha knows, Manomaya Kosha desires and Prānamaya Kosha acts. Jānāti, Icchati Yatate.

E.g. during the music season, we read the newspaper to see which all Sabhās have with Kutcheris. Now Vijnānamaya Kosha is functioning. Then you have to make your choice and decide on something. This is Manomaya Kosha. Prānamaya Kosha will then act in taking you to the Sabhā.

This also consist of six organs which are:

- Pancha Jnāna Indriyāni or Five sense organs of knowledge
- Buddhihi or intellect or rational faculty. This includes Chittam and Ahankāra

Incidentally, the emotional faculty, rational faculty etc are not different organs. The internal organ is only one. It gets different names based on the relevant function.

- When it is the thinking function, it is called Buddhihi
- When it is the emotional function, it is called Manaha
- When it is memory function it is called Chittam

Hence Mano Buddhihi Chitta Ahankāra are not names for separate organs but one organ named in four ways. This is the functional division of Sūkshma Sharīram.

11.2.5. Ānandamaya Kosha – Bliss layer (Causal body / “The Unconscious”)

This corresponds to Kāraṇa Sharīram. This can be equated to our unconscious personality or “The Unconscious” in psychology. So whatever emotions are dominant, our behaviour, our personality are all dormant in us and expressed at appropriate time. This is called unconscious or dormant personality.

Sometimes if we face a traumatic experience and the ego is not ready to face it then Bhagavān should make some arrangements like fusing – when the system is not ready to take the full current. Similarly in extraordinary physical pain also, when the body cannot take the pain, you get a situation when you don't feel any pain. This is physiological fusing.

Similarly we require a psychological fuse also at certain times when we are not ready to stand certain experience.

When we cannot stand, we have to throw out by either expressing it verbally or physically – either by crying or shouting. If due to circumstances one is not able to cry or shout or talk, then all those emotions which could not be handled by the ego, they are all put inside in the unconscious. You will find that at any time it is conducive, that comes out. That is why you cry for no reason or get angry for no reason. All bolted up emotions are getting released at that time. All such emotions and all such behaviour belong to unconscious.

The play of unconscious can be easily understood. When the response and the external situations don't tally e.g. for a small mistake a person flares. Small experiences are only a trigger for the inner one to manifest and that is called unconscious and hence called Kāraṇa Sharīram. It is Ānandamaya Kosha because being in the unconscious, it is unknown. And being unknown you are blissfully ignorant.

In Kāraṇa Sharīram or in Sushupti also, you do not feel any pain.

These are the five layers of the personality which are called Kosha Panchakam.

Saturday, 12 April 2008

12. Ātmā

Till now we dealt with the following from Tattvabodha:

- Sādhana Chatushtayam – Fourfold qualification
- Sharīra Trayam – Threefold body
- Avasthā Trayam – Threefold states of experience
- Pancha Koshaha – Fivefold personality layers of an individual

We also saw that Sharīra Trayam and Kosha Panchakam both refer to the same personality alone. The Sharīra Trayam itself looked from another angle is called Kosha Panchakam and are practically one and the same.

We will now go to the next and important topic of Tattvabodha namely Ātmā. Translated in English as Self or Soul. We will however maintain the usage of only Ātmā or Ātmān.

From the previous topics, we come to know that all the three bodies, Sharīra Trayam, are made up of matter. The gross body is made of gross elements – Pancha Bhūtāni – and since all the five elements are matter only, the gross body is made up of matter and hence is material in nature. Material meaning a product of matter. In Sanskrit we can translate matter as Bhūtam and material as Bhautikam. The Sthūla Sharīram is Pāncha Bhautikam material in nature.

Similarly we saw the Sūkshma Sharīram or subtle body that is also made up of five subtle elements, only difference being that Sūkshma Sharīram is made out of subtle

elements but that is also Pāncha Bhautikam and therefore material in nature. So gross body is material and subtle body is also material.

Also the causal body is the subtlest form of matter only because causal body is only the seed form of gross and subtle bodies. So before the gross and subtle bodies are generated, they should exist in potential form by law of conservation of matter and energy. Therefore before Srishti the gross and subtle body must have existed in potential form. That potential gross and subtle body is called causal body. Therefore that causal body must also be potential matter. Therefore Kāraṇa Sharīram is also material. What we arrive at is that Sharīra Trayam is material in nature. In Sanskrit matter is called Jadam. And once we understand that the three Sharīrams are Jadam, we have to derive certain important corollaries.

Firstly, any matter or material is inert in nature. According to Vedānta Shāstram, the definition of inertness is that which does not have consciousness and that which cannot produce consciousness. In Sanskrit we say it is neither Chaitanya Gunakam nor Chaitanya Janakam – does not have consciousness of its own and it cannot produce or generate consciousness also respectively. Since Sharīra Trayam is Jadam, material in nature, it does not have consciousness and does not produce consciousness. Therefore according to Shāstram, all the three Sharīram by their intrinsic nature are inert, non-consciousness, insentient in nature. This means that not only the body is inert and insentient, according to Shāstram, the mind also being part of Sūkshma Sharīram is also inert matter and therefore insentient. So according to Vedānta, mind does not have its own consciousness and mind cannot produce consciousness also. Same with Kāraṇa Sharīram also. So all the three bodies are intrinsically insentient. So Kasmāt [why]? Bhautikatvāt [because they are composed of elements]. So Sharīra Trayam Jadam Bhautikatvāt Ghatavat [three bodies are insentient because of their material nature]. This is the corollary we get from the study of the three bodies.

Even if this is the logical corollary, we find our experience is otherwise. Even though the three bodies must be insentient logically, I experience the three bodies as sentient ones – Chetana Sthūla Sharīram – I experience the body as a conscious body, conscious of the surroundings. Similarly I experience the mind as very much sentient. In short Sharīra Trayam is experienced as sentient one.

But logically Sharīra Trayam must be insentient one. How do we reconcile this? Logically Sharīra Trayam is insentient. By experience Sharīra Trayam is sentient. Vedānta Shāstram says this is possible. Suppose we know that a person is extremely poor but comes to a function with lot of ornaments. What is to be inferred? If he does not have his own and if he is still wearing them, the ornaments must be borrowed ones. A person is naturally ugly but now looks beautiful. This is possible through made up beauty or make-up. So very simply, in the same way Shāstram point out Sharīra Trayam does not have Svābhāvika Chaitanyam. It does not have natural consciousness and therefore they have Āgantuka Chaitanyam or borrowed consciousness.

With borrowed consciousness these three Sharīram are strutting like a peacock very proudly otherwise, there is no difference between a statue and our physical body. From the Shāstram angle we say Pancha Bhūtāni [five elements], from a scientific angle we say Body is made up of Chemical. How come that bundle of chemical is inert and this bundle of chemical is sentient. The only reason is that these enjoy borrowed consciousness.

To recapitulate, the stages of development are as follows :
Firstly we said Sharīra Trayam Bhautikam [made of elements].
Therefore Sharīra Trayam Jadam [insentient].
And they appear as though sentient and therefore Sharīra Trayam has borrowed consciousness.

If Sharīra Trayam has borrowed consciousness, borrowing is possible only when there is a lender. We require a consciousness which has to lend consciousness. And this lender of consciousness is the **fourth factor** in human personality. The other three being

- Sthūla Sharīram
- Sūkshma Sharīram
- Kāraṇa Sharīram

Sthūla Sūkshma Kāraṇa Sharīrat Vyatiriktaḥ [distinct] – other than these three there is a fourth factor which is the lender of consciousness.

What is that factor ? Who is the lender of that consciousness ? Enter Ātmā.

12.1. Fourth factor in human personality

Ātmā is the fourth factor in human personality which is the lender of consciousness to the first three factors – Sharīra Trayam. Therefore we can say Ātmā makes Sharīra Trayam aglow with consciousness. Ātmā makes Sharīra Trayam alive with consciousness. Ātmā makes Sharīra Trayam sentient with consciousness.

The nearest comparison is that just as electricity makes the bulb aglow with light or brilliance. We know that the bulb cannot glow by itself. The filament cannot glow by itself. Therefore other than the bulb and filament, there is another principle called electricity which makes the filament glow first, and through the filament it makes the bulb also brilliant. But the only thing is that the electricity part is invisible, the glowing filament and bulb alone are visible. Thus the visible bulb and filament are made glowing because of the invisible electricity “blessing” the bulb.

What is the nature of this Ātmā ?

12.2. The blessing principle

In Kenopanishad, Ātmā is called Devaha. We will see the important features of the Ātmā.

12.2.1. Ātmā Chaitanya Svarūpaha

Ātmā is of the nature of consciousness itself. It is a non-material principle. We say so because if Ātmā is also another matter, like the Sharīra Trayam, then Ātmā also will be Jadam and Ātmā will have to borrow consciousness from another principle. This will be never ending. So the original lender must be a non-borrower. A borrowing lender is not the original lender.

Ātmā being the original lender, Ātmā should not be borrowing consciousness from elsewhere. This means that Ātmā must be non-material in nature. In English they use the word Spirit as opposed to matter. Ātmā is said to be spiritual in nature.

Hence the first feature of Ātmā is that it is the non-material principle, spiritual principle of the nature of consciousness – Chaitanya Svarūpaha or Chit Rūpaha.

12.2.2. Ātmā Svatantraha – Independent

Ātmā is Svatantraha. It is an independent principle because it is of the nature of consciousness which is not dependant on matter for its production or existence. Consciousness does not depend on matter for its existence as well as production.

Previously we said, matter does not have consciousness. If matter has consciousness then consciousness will depend on matter. If matter produces consciousness then also consciousness will depend on matter. Since consciousness does not belong to matter and is not produced by matter, consciousness is an independent entity and does not depend on matter either for production or existence. This is the independent principle.

12.2.3. Ātmā Nirgunaha – Non-material

Since Ātmā is non-material in nature, it does not have any of the attributes belonging to matter. In fact whatever attributes we know, are all material attributes either perceived directly by our eyes or various instruments. All attributes we know belong to matter. Shabda, Sparsha, Rūpa, Rasa and Gandha belong to the five elements of Ākāshaha, Vāyuhu, Agni, Āpaha and Prithivi and the five elementals i.e. their products.

Ātmā is free from all these attributes. Ātmā is therefore Nirgunaha – attribute-less and property-free.

12.2.4. Ātmā Nityaha – Ever-existent

Since Ātmā does not depend on matter or Sharīra Trayam for its existence or production, even when matter perishes or collapses, Ātmā the consciousness principle continues to survive. Just as the electricity continues to survive even after the filament is destroyed, electricity is there. You do not feel the glow of the bulb and this is not because electricity is not there, but the bulb or filament is gone. Non-manifestation of electricity in the form of light is not non-existence of electricity.

Even when the material Sharīra Trayam collapse, Ātmā the consciousness principle

continues to survive. Therefore Ātmā is Nityaha. In a scientific language, the scientists point out that the universe is four dimensional. Three are spatial dimensions. The fourth one is called Time dimension. From this we come to know that time is the property or the fourth dimension of the material universe and consciousness being non-material, it does not have the property of time also. It is beyond time and is unconditioned by time – unlocatable time wise.

In simple language, Nityaha [eternal] or Kāla Atītaha. [beyond time]

12.2.5. Ātmā Sarvagataha – Boundless

Time and space are closely interconnected. Therefore Ātmā is not bound by time. It is invariably not restrained by, not conditioned by, not circumscribed by space also. Therefore Sarvagataha. It is not located in the Sharīra Trayam. It is behind Sharīra Trayam also. Just as the electricity is not only behind the small bulb, in fact one electricity is behind all the bulbs. It is there in between as well but we don't see because there is no bulb. Similarly, Ātmā Sarvagataha or Sarvavyāpi and it is behind all the Sharīra Trayams.

So bodies are many and of different shapes (like small or big bulb). So we have a small Sharīra Trayam e.g. of an ant as well as a big one as that of an elephant and behind all of these, there is an Ātmā. Therefore Ātmā Sarvagataha.

12.2.6. Ātmā Ekaha – One

If Ātmā is one consciousness principle behind all the bodies, Ātmā has to be only one even though bodies are many. Ātmā Ekaha. Ātmā Advaitaha. Ātmā Advitīyaha – non-dual. So this Ātmā is the fourth factor in the personality of every individual.

Interestingly enough a lot of scientific study is going on the field of consciousness. Some scientists have made statements very close to Vedāntik teaching.

12.3. Ātmā Anātmā Vivekaha – Discerning Atma from Anatma

Since this non-material consciousness is called Ātmā, the material Sharīra Trayam is called Anātmā. The first step in Vedāntik study is Ātmā Anātmā Vivekaha. Understanding that there are three factors within Anātmā range and one factor known as Ātmā and I the individual am a mixture of the material Anātmā and non-material Ātmā. Time-space-bound Anātmā and time-space-beyond Ātmā.

Learning this is the first lesson of Vedanta. For further appreciation of Vedanta, we have to go through some exercise or discipline or Sādhanā for going further into the teaching. The word Ātmā literally means Self. Self means I. Naturally the word Anātmā means non-self.

By using this expression Ātmā and Anātmā, what the scriptures want us to do is that we should train ourselves to claim the Ātmā as myself. Also the Upanishads teach us that we should gradually train to renounce our identification with the material perishable incidental

Anātmā aspect. So discipline dis-identify from Anātmā and learn to identify with Ātmā. In Sanskrit Anātmā Abhimāna Tyāgaha [abstention from thinking you are anatma,] Ātmā Abhimāna Nishthā [always thinking you are Atma].

So this is a new training to be practised by Vedāntik seeker. In fact, all Vedāntik Sādhanāni are meant for this switchover of identification. If somebody asks for your bio-data, we give date of birth, graduation etc - in fact our entire bio-data is Sharīra Trayam oriented bio-data. And keep this bio-data for worldly transactions but within yourself, a transformation should take place. This transformation is that the regular bio-data is for the sake of the world and my real bio-data is :

Aham Chaitanya Svarūpaha – I am Consciousness itself

Aham Svatantarya – I am independent

Aham Nirgunaha – I am non-material [guna-less]

Aham Nityaha – I am ever-existent

Aham Sarvagataha – I am boundless

Aham Ekaha – I am one

So this claiming of my real bio-data is claiming my birthright and I should learn to claim. And only as I claim this, further Vedāntik teaching will penetrate. This is the first lesson.

The next question is – How can I train myself for that ? For this training, the scriptures give a method or Upāyaha. An Upāyaha is given for assisting this training which is called Drik Drishya Viveka. This is the methodology of training the mind to disown or disclaim the material Anātmā. You can use the material Anātmā but claim the non-material Ātmā.

We don't say you should not own the scooter, but you should not say I am the scooter. This method involves application of two important fundamental laws of Vedanta.

12.3.1. Fundamental Law – 1

I am different from whatever I experience.

Whatever I experience is the experienced object. I the experiencer am the subject and therefore I the experiencer-subject am different from whatever is the experience object. I experience a fan but am not the fan. I experience the entire world and I am not that.

Extending this principle, if the world that I experience is not me, I experience my body and I experience my mind and therefore the body mind also are the object of my experience. Therefore I am the experiencer of Sharīra Trayam. Sharīra Trayam is the object of my experience and I am the subject behind the experienced object. I am ever the observer and never the observed.

12.3.2. Fundamental Law – 2

I the experiencer am free from the attributes of the experienced objects.

And in fact all the attributes I experience belong either to the experienced world, the experienced body or the experienced mind. Therefore all known attributes belong to

known material Anātmā. I am the knower of the attributes and therefore free from all these known attributes.

*Mano Buddhyahankāra Chittāni Nāham
Na Cha Shrotra Jihve Na Cha Ghrāna Netre
Na Cha Vyoma Bhūmir Na Tejo Na Vāyuhu
Chidānanda Rūpaha Shivoham Shivoham*

I am not the mind, nor the intellect, neither the ego nor the subconscious
I am also not the ear, not the nose, not the eye
I am neither the ether nor the earth, neither the fire nor the air
I am the form of pure bliss, I am Universal Consciousness

Thus by applying these two laws, I am different from whatever I experience, I am free from the attributes of the objects that I experience.

Therefore I am the following

- Chaitanya Svarūpaha – Consciousness itself
- Svatantaha – Independent
- Nirgunaha – Non-material
- Nityaha – Ever-existent
- Sarvagataha – Boundless
- Ekaha – One

...Ātmā Asmi – I am Atma

Monday, 14 April 2008

13. Creation

All the studies that we did till now, whether Sharīra Trayam or Avasthā Trayam are all associated with the individual or microcosm. In Sanskrit we use the word Vyashti. Today we are going to the next topic through which we are entering Samashti or macrocosm. The topic is Srishti or creation or cosmology.

How does the cosmos or creation come about and what was there exactly before creation came ?

First before understanding the topic of creation, we should clearly know that the very word creation is a misnomer. In fact that very word being a misnomer can create a lot of confusion. Creation creates confusion. Why do we say Creation is a misnomer ? That is because nothing can be created. By the very law of conservation of matter and energy which was accepted long before modern science came. In the Sāṅkhyā Satkārya Vāda, the Sāṅkhyā philosophers discussed the law of conservation of matter and energy. In Māndūkya Kārika, it is beautifully presented that nothing can be created. And extending the same principle, nothing can be destroyed.

Then if at all we use the word Creation, it only refers to the manifestation of something which was potentially un-manifestly existent. So what is un-manifestly, potentially existent in dormant form, that can come to manifestation.

13.1. Manifest Vs Unmanifest

What is meant by the words manifest and unmanifest? The word unmanifest, we mean Pramānam Agocharam. Unmanifest is that which is existent but is not available for perception or transaction like the butter in the milk. Butter is there in the milk, but we cannot see it in the milk. But we know that milk has butter. So what can we say about butter being existent or not? It is existent technically but for all practical purposes, since it is neither available for perception nor available for transaction, we assume that butter is non-existent. But we know butter is there.

We can extend this to everything in the creation. Nothing in the creation is non-existent. It was existent in potential manner. Later it becomes manifest, which means available for transaction. Our scriptures point out, before the origination of this cosmos, it should have existed because of this simple law of conservation. And if this creation existed before, it should have existed in unmanifest form or potential form or dormant form which we can call as the seed of the creation. In Sanskrit we use the word Bījam for this.

Bījasyāntari Vānkuro Jagadidam

Prān Nirvikalpam Punah

Nirvikalpam means un-differentiated and unmanifest in an un-transactable form. And we will use for the word Causal form of matter – matter in its causal form which is the source of all forms of energy and all forms of matter. Scientists are trying to arrive at one basic matter that can explain all the sub-atomic particles, that which can explain the micro and macro. The scientists want to reconcile the General Theory of relativity at Macro level and the Quantum Physics at Micro by a theory of everything.

According to our scriptures that basic stuff that is the source of all forms of energy and all forms of matter which includes all particles and molecules in the creation, we call it causal matter. The causal matter is called Māyā. This includes Sharīra Trayam also. This means that before the creation originated, one thing was there which is Māyā.

Borrowing the idea from the previous session, we have to include one more thing before creation. In the previous class, we saw, Ātmā is the consciousness principle which is the non-material spirit, which does not come under matter and therefore which does not come within time and space. We also saw that consciousness is beyond time and space which mean consciousness has to be eternal. This means that before the creation, consciousness also existed.

So now we had arrived at two things that were existing before creation:

- Principle 1 : Consciousness which is called Ātmā which is unconditioned by, un-influenced by, un-circumscribed by the time-space principle

- Principle 2 : Whole creation in causal matter form called Māyā

Therefore Ātmā and Māyā existed. In the context of cosmology or creation, consciousness is given another name. In the context of the individual (Micro level), consciousness is given the name Ātmā. The very same consciousness at the Macro level is not different, but the nomenclature is Brahma or Brahman. Therefore Ātmā is equal to Brahman is equal to consciousness.

Why then have two names ? The basis of the two names is that one is from Micro angle Ātmā and another is from Macro angle Brahman. And the meaning also almost the same. Ātmā means Āpnoti Sarvam Iti Ātmā – the boundless all pervading one. The word Brahman means infinite derived from the root Bruh – to be big – therefore Brahman means the The Big One, the Absolutely Big One.

Therefore the study of cosmology begins with two beginning-less principles known as Brahman and Māyā – Consciousness or spirit + matter

Tattvabodha starts this way – *Brahmāshrayā Sattva Rajas Tamo Gunātmikā Māyā Asti.*

13.2 Differences between Māyā and Brahman

And what is the common feature of Brahman and Māyā ? Both are beginning-less. They have no origin. And what are their differences ? Differences are more to be noted:

- Brahman is the non-material consciousness whereas Māyā is material principle
- Consciousness is property-less principle. It does not have any physical or chemical properties because it is non-material in nature – Nirguna. Whereas Māyā is matter and hence full of potential properties Saguna.
- Brahman the consciousness being beyond time and space, is never subject to change. Therefore it is changeless. Whereas Māyā the matter principle can never remain the same.
- The consciousness principle is Nirvikalpa not subject to spatial division – here one consciousness, there one consciousness : this can never arise. It is division-less and beyond time and space. Whereas Māyā the material is subject to multiplication and division. Māyā is like an amoeba where it multiplies by division. Māyā can multiply into the cosmos by division.

These are the basic difference between Brahman and Māyā and out of this mixture alone is this universe manifests out of the seed which is Māyā. In our scriptures the word Creation is always replaced by the word Manifestation.

Srishtihi Nāma Abhivyaktihi : Abhivyaktihi means coming to manifestation for your recognition like you churn and bring out the butter which is then available tangibly for your transaction.

13.3. Stages of Manifestation

In the scriptures the evolution or manifestation of the cosmos is presented in two stages. Like a seed becoming a plant in the middle stage, and the plant becoming a full fledged tree in the final stages.

Therefore Māyā is a seed and then there is an intermediary stage called Sūkshma Prapancha Abhivyaktiḥ – the causal matter comes to the level of subtle matter. In other words, the causal universe comes to the level of subtle universe comparable to that of a plant. And then the subtle universe then again evolves or again manifests to become the gross universe fully available for all forms of transaction.

If you have to understand the difference between the subtle and gross creation you can compare your body and mind. Mind is also a creation or manifestation. Body is also a manifestation. But mind is a subtle manifestation not available for all. My mind is available only for me hence subtle and not tangible. But Body is gross.

Therefore causal universe to subtle universe to Gross universe. This is the creation. Of these, the causal universe is beginning-less, but the subtle and gross have a beginning. Once it has become fully gross and moved about for some time, what happens to the whole creation ? Again it collapses, condenses or contracts, evolution will later end up in involution or dissolution. The gross become subtle and subtle again becomes gross. Thus unmanifest to manifest and manifest to Unmanifest the universe has been there always. Universe will be there always. The difference is there in the Avasthā Bhedhaha Na Tu Vastu Bhedhaha. There is no increase or decrease in matter but there is only change in its condition or state – manifest condition to unmanifest condition and unmanifest to manifest.

*Avyaktādīni Bhūtāni Vyaktamadyāni Bhārata
Avyakta Nidhanānyeva Tatra Kā Paridevanā*

Krishna tells in the Bhagavad Gītā – why are you talking about death? Death is nothing but body going out of shape. Nothing is lost, Arjuna, but for whom are you crying ?

The problem is that we have got attached to shape and lost sight of the substance. This is the layout of the cosmology. Let us now get into a little bit more of details.

We will go into the second stage. Causal universe is called Māyā which has to manifest into the subtle universe. The scriptures point out that first, out of the causal universe five subtle elements are born. These are the Pancha Bhūtāni. These are

- Ākāshaha or space
- Vāyu or air
- Agni or fire
- Jalam or water
- Bhūmihi or Prithivi : the earth

In the initial stages, they are in subtle form, which means they are not available for our transaction. They are not even visible. Subtle Prithivi is not even visible to us.

In scientific form, Prithivi does not refer to the earth itself but refers to the solid form of matter. And Jalam does not refer to water alone, but refers to the liquid form of matter. Then the third is the vapour or gaseous form. The fourth state is the plasma state. In science we have only four. But in Shāstram, we have the fifth stage – Ākāshaha even beyond the plasma stage.

Now the scriptures point out that these five elements have evolved from Māyā and therefore whatever be the features of Māyā must be inherent in the elements. In other words, whatever are the features of Māyā, these must have been in the cosmos or universe and whatever must be in the universe must be in Māyā. Because the law is that the features of the cause inhere the effect – Kāraṇa Guṇāhā Kārye Anuvartante.

13.4. Three Features or Stages of Manifestation

And when we study the entire universe, we can see three common features which are widely present in the cosmos.

13.4.1. Jnāna Shaktiḥ

The first feature is Jnāna Shaktiḥ or Knowing faculty or sentiency faculty. This is especially found in living beings through which they are able to sense or experience the world. If all the creation has been inert, there will be nobody to do any transaction.

13.4.2. Kriyā Shaktiḥ

Another feature we see is Kriyā Shaktiḥ – dynamism. This is the capacity to be active.

13.4.3. Dravya Shaktiḥ

In this feature, both Jnāna Shaktiḥ and Kriyā Shaktiḥ are absent or stultified. This is the inertia feature. Inertia means the absence of knowing faculty and absence of acting faculty. Neither can it act nor can it know. This is called Dravya Shaktiḥ.

Technically these three faculties are known as:

- Sattva Guṇaha for Jnāna Shaktiḥ
- Rajo Guṇaha for Kriyā Shaktiḥ
- Tamo Guṇaha for Dravya Shaktiḥ

These three Guṇāhā are inherent in Māyā. Therefore Māyā is defined as Tri Guṇātmikā Māyā endowed with threefold features which are seen in the universe.

E.g. during a class, only the Dravya Shakti is being used – just grasping. Then based on this knowledge, acting is called Kriyā Shaktiḥ. Then during sleep neither you know things nor do things – this time Dravya Shakti is being used. If these features are seen in the cosmos, they must be there in Māyā. Therefore Māyā has three Guṇāhā and these three Guṇāhā inhere the five elements also.

Here interestingly, Guna should not be translated as property. They are to be translated

as the components of Māyā. Three Gunāhā are like the three strands of a plaited string. Hence one of the meanings of Guna is String. These three features or Gunāhā are in unmanifest in the five elements also. Thus we have got Sāttvika component of space, Rājasik a component of space and Tāmasik component of space. Similarly we have Sāttvika component of air, Rājasik component of air and Tāmasik component of air. Same applies for Fire, Water and Earth.

<u>Sāttvika</u>	<u>Rājasik</u>	<u>Tāmasik</u>
- Space	- Space	- Space
- Air	- Air	- Air
- Fire	- Fire	- Fire
- Water	- Water	- Water
- Earth	- Earth	- Earth

Hence we have fifteen items.

Hence the first form of creation is Sūkshma Bhūta Srishtihi – the creation or manifestation of the subtle elements.

13.5. Stages of Creation

13.5.1. Stage 1 – Sattva Guna as generator

Then the scriptures point out that out of the subtle elements alone, all the subtle bodies of the individual are manifested. Let us understand this better.

We have got five organs of knowledge – Pancha Jnāna Indriyāni. The faculty associated with this is, naturally, the Knowing faculty. They are born out of five elements. Five elements generate the five organs of action. Five subtle elements generate five subtle organs.

And when we say five subtle elements, which component must be responsible ? The SattvaGuna which stands for Jnāna Shakti. The SattvaGuna components of the five elements are responsible for the generation of the five sense organs of knowledge.

What is the order of generation ?

- The Sattva Guna component of Space is responsible for ears
- The Sattva Guna component of Air is the generator of skin
- The Sattva Guna component of Fire is the generator of Eye
- The Sattva Guna component of Water is the generator of Tongue
- The Sattva Guna component of Earth is the generator of Nose

Hence Ears, Skin, Eye, Tongue and Nose, the five subtle organs or knowing features or sensory faculties are born out of the five elements.

The fourfold mind or inner organ which coordinates or controls the five sense organs is

born out of the Sāttvika component of all the five elements. The reason is that the mind has to control all the sense organs. In fact a sense organ functions only when the mind is behind it. Therefore the mind has to be behind the Ears, Skin, Eye, Tongue and Nose. Therefore it requires the Sattva Guna of all the five. The inner organ (mind) is born out of Sāttvika components of all the five elements.

13.5.2. Stage 2 – Rajas Guna as generator

Extending the same principle we have the Pancha Karma Indriyāni. Five sense organs of action are also generated out of five subtle elements. But the component is the Kriyā Shakti component called Rajas component.

In what order are these born ?

- The Rājasik component of Space is responsible for Organ of Speech - Vāk
- The Rājasik component of Air is the generator of Organ of Hands – Pāni
- The Rājasik component of Fire is the generator of Organ of Legs – Pāda
- The Rājasik component of Water is the generator of Organ of Anus – Pāyuhu
- The Rājasik component of Earth is the generator of Organ of Genitals – Upastha

Then behind the five Karma Indriyāni or five sense of action, what is required is Prāna Shakti or Life force. Without Prāna Shakti, no organ can act. Therefore during days of fasting, when we have not eaten, we cannot even speak or act properly. Therefore The Prāna Shakti or Pancha Prānāhā which supports all the Pancha Karma Indriyāni must be born out of the Rājasik component of all the five elements. Just as the mind is born out of total Sattva elements, Prāna is born out of total Rajas elements, whereas individual sense organs are born out of individual elements.

The entire Sūkshma Sharīram is born out of Sattva Guna and Rajo Guna of the five subtle elements. Therefore we have seen Sūkshma Bhūta Srishti and Sūkshma Sharīram Srishti – in short the entire subtle universe. If there are any other subtle worlds or creation, they are all born out of the combination of subtle elements only.

13.5.3. Stage 3 –Tamo Guna as generator

We then come to the third and final stage of creation – the gross visible and tangible universe. The scriptures explain how it comes about. We have utilised the Sattva components of the five components of the five elements. We have also utilised the Rajas components of the five components of the five elements. We have not yet used the Tamas component of the five elements.

The scriptures point out that the Tamas component of the five elements alone get grossified to become the five gross elements – Pancha Sthūla Bhūtāni. The five gross elements are born out of or manifest from the Tamo Gunaha of the five subtle elements.

Eteshām Pancha Sūkshma Bhūtānām Tamo Amshāt Pancha Sthūla Bhūtāni

The scriptures point out that, until grossification, each element was isolated and pure.

One element was not adulterated or mixed with others. But when grossification takes place, the Tamo Guna of these five elements get intermixed. This is just like eating a salad. Sūkshma Prapancha is like eating grapes separately, bananas separately etc. Grossification means eating all together. Once we come to five grossified elements, each element has got a mixture of all the five. So Earth has got five elements, space has got five elements. Same way for Air, Fire and Water.

Now the question arises if each element is a mixture of five, how will you name the elements ? The scriptures say that the naming is done based on the predominance of the elements. Therefore scriptures point out, Gross Space has got all the given elements in the following proportion:

- 50 % is Space part
- The other four elements will be only in one eighth proportion i.e. 12.5%

This process of “salad making” is called Panchī Karanam or Grossification. The same applies for the other gross elements as well. Gross air has 50% air etc.

Once the five gross elements are born, out of that the entire cosmos including all our physical bodies are created. This is called Sthūla Srishti or Sthūla Abhivyakti.

Thus Māyā is causal universe. And out of that comes subtle universe called Sūkshma Abhivyakti. And out of that comes gross universe which is called Sthūla Abhivyakti. Thus the entire creation comes out.

It will last for some time and again collapse into Māyā. What will be Brahman doing ? Consciousness remains. When appropriate condition comes it manifests in the form of life. When the manifesting conditions are not there (cells are not formed), consciousness remains unmanifest. This is Vedic Cosmology.

<u>Sāttvika</u>	<u>Rājasik</u>	<u>Tāmasik</u>
Space (Ear)	Space (Speech)	Space (Mixture)
Air (Skin)	Air (Hands)	Air (Mixture)
Fire (Eye)	Fire (Legs)	Fire (Mixture)
Water (Tongue)	Water (Anus)	Water (Mixture)
Earth (Nose)	Earth (Genitals)	Earth (Mixture)

Saturday, 19 April 2008

14. Jīva Īshvara Aikya

In the previous sessions, we have seen the main theme of the Vedāntik Teaching – Jīva Ātmā Parama Ātmā Aikyam. The idea conveyed is that Ātmā the Chaitanyam is only Ekam. Aikyam means oneness. Therefore Ātmā the Chaitanyam is only one and that one Chaitanyam alone is expressing through the matter principle. And when that Chaitanyam is functioning through individual matter called Sharīra Trayam, then the consciousness gets

the name Jīva Ātmā. And when the very same consciousness is functioning behind total matter or Prapancha Trayam, then the very same Ātmā is called Parama Ātmā.

Therefore one Ātmā alone is called Jīva Ātmā as well as Parama Ātmā from the standpoint of the medium through which it functions. Once the Anātmā medium is removed the matter medium is removed, there is neither Jīva Ātmā nor is there Parama Ātmā. There is only Ātmā which is neither called Jīva Ātmā nor Parama Ātmā. Therefore one Ātmā functioning through Anātmā get the two names Jīva Ātmā and Parama Ātmā. And that one Ātmā I am.

I am called Jīva Ātmā when I am functioning behind this body. I myself am Parama Ātmā when I am functioning behind the whole universe.

This is the basic teaching of Jāgrat Avasthā Parama Ātmā Aikyam or Ātmā Ekatvam.

There is one more important topic which we will briefly go through. It is a topic by itself. That topic is the relationship between Ātmā and Anātmā. Because we say there is only one Ātmā. We know the relationship between Jīva Ātmā and Parama Ātmā as being one and the same. Now we are asking what is the relationship between Ātmā and Anātmā – the Spirit and Matter and the Vedanta point out that their relationship is Depender and Depended relationship, supporter – supported relationship. This means that matter depends on consciousness. Even to prove its existence matter depends on consciousness.

To say there is a clock in front of me, I have to see the clock to prove whether it is existent or not. To prove the existence of anything in the creation, I have to see it or know it directly or indirectly. Whereas to show or to prove that I am existent I don't require any proof because my existence is very evident. Therefore matter depends on consciousness for both to prove its existence as well as for its functioning. Whereas consciousness does not depend upon matter for its existence. Therefore the scriptures point out that consciousness is Satyam and matter is Mithyam. Satyam means independent or Svatantraha. Whereas matter is Mithyam or Para Tantraha (opposite of Svatantraha).

The example we generally give is that of clay and pot. Clay exists independent of pot that even if the pot is broken the clay can continue to exist. Whereas the pot cannot exist independent of clay. Therefore clay is called Satyam and pot is called Mithyam. Wood is called Satyam and furniture is called Mithyam. Gold is Satyam and ornaments are Mithyam. Water is Satyam whereas waves oceans and tanks and lakes are Mithyam.

Hence Satyam means independent and Mithyā means dependent. Ātmā is one and Anātmā are many. Ātmā is Satyam and Anātmā are Mithyam. And this one Ātmā appears as Jīva Ātmā at individual levels and Parama Ātmā at total level.

Therefore the Vedāntik teaching can be presented in three statements. The whole Vedāntik teaching can be presented as:

- Parama Ātmā is Satyam
- Anātmā is Mithyam

- Jīva Ātmā is identical with Parama Ātmā.

This is the Vedānta Sāraha [Essence of Vedānta].

We will deal with the means and benefits of getting this knowledge.

14.1. Means of Acquiring Knowledge

The means is called Jnāna Yogaha. This Jnāna Yoga which is the means of getting this knowledge is presented in three stage – these are:

- Shravanam means listening
- Mananam means reflection
- Nididhyāsanam means contemplation

Once I have removed doubts in the intellectual level through Mananam and removed the emotional weakness through Nididhyāsanam, then the knowledge is called assimilated knowledge – Jnāna Nishthā.

Shravanam is done with the help of the teacher. Mananam is done both independently and with the help of the teacher. Whereas Nididhyāsanam has to be done independently alone – no teacher can help. One has to apply the knowledge during the Nididhyāsanam phase. We have to remember that assimilated knowledge alone will give me benefits just like assimilated food alone nourishes me.

Krishna warns in the Gītā that any amount of study is of no use unless it is assimilated through Mananam and Nididhyāsanam.

14.2. Jnāna Phalam – Fruit of knowledge

The next topic is Jnāna Phalam – the benefit of this knowledge. The benefit is presented in two forms in the Shāstram:

- One is the benefit while we are living, i.e. before death
- The other one is the benefit after death.

14.2.1. Jīvan Muktihi – Liberation while living

This is the benefit while we are still living. This is the virtue or Phalam enjoyed at the mental level in various forms. The problems faced at the mental level include insecurity, fear, sense of inadequacy, jealousy and anger – all these are psychological problems called Samsara. It is purely at the mental or psychological level and not at the physical level – because it is knowledge and therefore gives benefit at the mental level.

Jīvan Muktihi means that I continue to face the challenges in life. At the same time, I am free from these unhealthy responses. All unhealthy responses are emotional problems called Samsara.

The three benefits of Jīvan Muktihi are :

14.2.1.1. Independence – Svatantriyam

The first and most important benefit is independence. I am mentally emotionally or psychologically an independent person. This means that the presence or absence of things will not affect me emotionally. Only when I am dependent on external factors, their presence and absence will affect me emotionally. Jnānam gives me independence from all setup – whether it is a person or situation or an object. I don't seek company nor do I feel lonely.

14.2.1.2. Fullness – Pūrnatvam

The second benefit is Pūrnatvam – sense of fulfilment in life. I know I am the Ātmā which is not confined to this body but I am the Ātmā which is Sat Chit Ānanda Svarūpaha and therefore I am free from limitation. Nothing is away from me. Everything belongs to me. There is no sense of isolation or rejection. Because if I am a person, I can be rejected. But nobody can reject me because I am all pervading. Sense of isolation, sense of rejection and sense of limitation go away just as space cannot be rejected by anyone, I the Ātmā cannot be rejected by anyone.

14.2.1.3. Balance of Mind – Samattvam

The third benefit is Samattvam. This means the emotional strength to face ups and downs of life. Jnānam becomes a great shock absorber. Similarly in life I cannot control my future situation where many things are beyond my control. But by Jnānam even the worst troubles may affect me sometimes, but not permanently.

It is to be noted that physically we will surely have to depend on the world. We require food, clothing and shelter. We will never get physical independence. But psychologically we may be able to become independent. This is called Jīvan Muktihi. The word literally means Freedom while Living.

14.2.2. Videha Muktihi – Liberation from body

To understand this, we have to know what happens to an ignorant person after death. Then only we can understand what happens to an Jnani after death.

In the case of Ajnani, at the time of death, the physical body is dropped. There is separation from physical body. The very definition of death is separation from physical body. That is why the physical body decays and merges into Pancha Bhūtāni or five elements.

But even though the physical body perishes, the subtle body and causal body continue to exist. This subtle and causal body along with Ātmā – all pervading everywhere – continue to survive even after the fall of the body. It acquires another body to continue the journey. And it may acquire the body here itself or it may acquire the body elsewhere. Therefore an Ajnani travels after death. In other words his Sūkshma Sharīram and Kāraṇa Sharīram travel and acquire another physical body and this is called Punar Janma or

rebirth.

The Sūkshma Sharīram and Kāraṇa Sharīram will again go through life and again die and again acquire another body. But death and birth is only at the level of the physical body.

In the case of a Jnani, it is said in the scriptures that at the time of death, all the three bodies merge into the Samashti. The Sharīra Trayam will merge into Prapancha Trayam. Sthūla Sharīram merges into Sthūla Prapancha. Sūkshma Sharīram merges into Sūkshma Prapancha and Kāraṇa Sharīram merges into Kāraṇa Prapancha. That means Jnani does not survive as an individual but he survives as the Samashti the total. And he is no more called Jīva Ātmā – because only when the body is there you can call it as Jīva Ātmā – when the Sharīra Trayam is gone, he is one with Parama Ātmā. Jīva Ātmā has become Parama Ātmā losing the individuality just as the river loses its individuality when it merges into the ocean. Also there is not question of Punar Janma . There is no Sūkshma Kāraṇa Sharīram surviving to acquire another Sthūla Sharīram.

Therefore Videha Muktihi is freedom from Punar Janma [re-birth]. And why does Jnānam give the benefit of Videha Muktihi? The scriptures present this topic in a particular way. They say Jnānam stops Punar Janma by destroying all Karmas.

Monday, 21 April 2008

15. Law of Karma

In the last few sessions, we saw the central teaching of the Vedanta – namely Jīva Ātmā and Parama Ātmā Aikyam. Through this, I am given to understand that I am not the Reflected Consciousness which is the Distorted Consciousness through the medium. But I am the original Consciousness which is none other than Brahman. The distortions will be there as long as the medium continues to distort. But whether medium distorts or not, I in my original nature is undistorted Consciousness. And this is not only true with regards to me, this is true with regards to every individual. Therefore every one of us is nothing but Original Consciousness and not Reflected Consciousness.

And this is not only true with regard to me the Jīvāhā [mortal individual], it is true with regards to Īshvara [Personal God] also. Īshvara is also another form of distorted consciousness only because Īshvara also has certain superior Gunāhā [virtues], and presence of Gunāhā is a distortion. Because the original consciousness does not have positive virtues also. So in the case of Īshvara, positive virtues is distortion, in the case of Jīva negative virtues or vices or properties are distortions.

And these two distortions are caused by the reflecting media (RM) and when we look at ourselves from the standpoint of ourselves, we are all Original Consciousness. This is Jīva Ātmā Parama Ātmā Aikya Jnānam given by the Vedanta. Having seen this knowledge, we will now see the Jnāna Phalam – what is the benefit of gaining this knowledge ? What do I

get out of it ? What practical benefit can I derive out of gaining this knowledge.

In the Shāstram and in the Tattvabodha the benefit is presented as Jīvan Muktihi and Videha Muktihi. The knowledge is that I am not Reflected (limited distorted) Consciousness – otherwise called Ego - but I am Original Consciousness – unlimited and undistorted consciousness.

15.1. Jīvan Muktihi – Liberation while living

How do I accomplish the freedom as to be derived from Jīvan Muktihi ?

All the problems and challenges of life belong to the Reflected Consciousness alone – the Jīva alone has all the challenges of life. They belong to the Ego alone – because every situation will affect either Reflecting Media 1 (Physical body) or RM2 or RM3. Through the Reflecting medium, the reflected consciousness may be affected but not the original. Therefore all problems belong to Reflected Consciousness and no problems belong to Original Consciousness. We know that Reflected Consciousness is insignificant compared to Original Consciousness because Reflected Consciousness is an incidental aspect of mind who am nothing but Original Consciousness.

Therefore when I go on invoking my higher nature, Original Consciousness nature, the Reflected Consciousness and the problems of Reflected Consciousness become insignificant. Not that they go away, but from a higher perspective, these will become insignificant. Like during the freedom struggle, when they invoked the patriot in themselves, the freedom of the country became so important and other miseries and going to jail were not significant at all. When we invoke a higher “I”, the lower “I” and its problems will not disappear but will become insignificant. In Sanskrit we call it Abhibhāvaha . So when the sun rises, the candle light is overshadowed but though it continues, the candle light is as good as not being there. Similarly in the discovery of the higher I, all the problems of Samsara are as good as not there. This inner freedom or immunity or shock absorber is given by the discovery of the higher “I”. This immunity enjoyed is called Jīvan Muktihi which is the benefit enjoyed while living. Jnānam serves as an armour against unhealthy responses.

15.2. Videha Muktihi – Liberation from body

The second benefit is Videha Muktihi. This means freedom from Punar Janma or rebirth. To understand this freedom from rebirth, we should know the Law of Karma. Because Law of Karma is the principle behind rebirth as well as Freedom from rebirth. Videha Muktihi is understood only when the Law of Karma is understood. We will study the Law of Karma as an Anga of Videha Muktihi.

15.2.1. Law of Karma – Results of action

The Law of Karma is one of the most important laws of Vedic teaching and is the unique to Vedic teaching.

15.2.1.1. First Principle

The first principle that we should remember in understanding the Law of Karma is that every deliberate or wilful action that we do, the Shāstram point out, produces two forms of result. One is called the Visible result – drishta Phalam - and the other is the invisible result – Adrishta Phalam.

And if the action is a good action, there is a good visible and invisible result, and if there is a bad action, there is a bad visible and invisible result. E.g. if I do something for a charitable cause, firstly the visible result is that someone is benefited from it. The second result is that since I have done a noble action of helping others, it produces an invisible result called Adrishtam. And since the action is good, it is called Su-Adrishtam – good invisible result.

On the other hand, when I cheat someone to earn money, the visible result is quite evident-increase in bank balance. The invisible result is negative arising from this is called Dur-Adrishtam - negative invisible result.

The Su-Adrishtam is called Punyam and the Dur-Adrishtam is called Pāpam. Thus every deliberate action in addition to visible result produces Punyam and Pāpam. One won't see Punyam and Pāpam because they are invisible. This is the first principle of the Law of Karma – Punyam and Pāpam.

15.2.1.2. Second Principle

The next principle to be remembered is what produces Punyam and Pāpam. This is determined based on two norms.

The first norm is the scriptural injunction. Whatever the scriptures promote or enjoin – those actions will produce Punyam. Whatever the scriptures prohibit – such actions will produce Pāpam. Supposing an action produces visible good result and suppose that action is prohibited by the scriptures, then we say such an action will produce Pāpam even though it may produce a visible good result.

The second norms : Suppose I am doing an action which is not discussed in the scriptures at all – travelling by train – what would be the norms for judgement of such activities ? The norm is based on the motive. What is the motive of my actions ? If my motive is good and noble, that Karma will produce Punyam and if it is ignoble it produces Pāpam.

Therefore based on the norm of Shāstriik injunction and motive, we decide whether a Karma is Punyam or Pāpam.

15.2.1.3. Third Principle

All the invisible Punyam and Pāpam in due course will be converted into visible Sukham and Duhkham – drishta Sukham and drishta Duhkham respectively.

In this we can never say, how long a particular Punyam will take to get converted into

Sukham. The duration for conversion is not uniform. Today's Punyam can become tomorrow's Sukham or day-after-tomorrow's Sukham or next decade's Sukham or it can become even in the next Janma. The duration will never be known by us. Some Punyams can give immediate Sukham while some Punyams can give delayed Sukham.

The example given in the Shāstram is the different types of seeds that are planted on the same day. A papaya seed or mango seed and coconut seed. Even though the date of planting is the same, different seeds take different duration of time to become full-fledged results.

Because of this, we have to derive another corollary. Since the Punyam and Pāpam can fructify at different duration, some of the Punya Pāpam may not fructify in this Janma itself. This means that un-fructified Punya Pāpams remain in the case of every Jīva. And because of the un-fructified Punya Pāpam, we will have to take Punar Janma and an appropriate for the fructification of these un-fructified ones for reaping the result of our actions.

The scriptures say that nobody can escape from the moral Law of the Lord. One can escape from the criminal law of the country but never from the cosmic Moral Order and Law of the Lord.

Therefore the Law of Karma necessitates repeated Birth and Death and therefore the preset birth is one of the long chain of birth and death. Thus the cycle of birth and death is caused by the law of Karma.

Our scriptures point out that this has to be very clearly understood and assimilated by every individual. This is even more fundamental than self-knowledge. The more we assimilate this law, the more healthy will be our attitude towards problems of life.

15.2.2. Advantages of Law of Karma

If I assimilate the Law of Karma, what are the advantages? What attitudinal changes will it bring. The assimilation of the Law of Karma will bring some healthy attitudinal changes.

First advantage is that the Law of Karma explains the disparity and differences in the living being. Why are living being born differently. Some are animal while some are plants and some human beings. And among human beings, some born with silver spoon or some in the slums. This is because of the Law of Karma.

If this Law of Karma is not accepted, then people will have to resort to the principle of chance. I see the creation being orderly. Science proves everyday that the creation is governed by laws and wherever law is there, there is order. Then how can I say that the disparity alone is chance?

Second advantage, Law of Karma helps in accepting the inexplicable sufferings. When I am not able to accept my problems and go on asking "Why me?", Law of Karma helps in accepting. I know that I am responsible for every one of my suffering through my immediate past action or through my remote past action. I may not remember which

remote past action for my current state – good or bad. I will not blame anyone in the world. Blaming is the most natural tendency. Thus, resistance and not taking responsibility is sorrow.

Third advantage is that the Faith in God will not be shaken if I accept the Law of Karma. This is because I know that even though I am a good person now, if I suffer my suffering is not because of an unjust God. The suffering is because of my remote past actions which I don't remember now. God can never be unjust. There is no injustice in the world. There seems to be injustice because we do not recollect the past Pāpam Karma.

Otherwise when I suffer I begin to question the Lord's sense of justice. There have been many religious people who did not understand the Law of Karma and therefore blame God for their suffering and turn atheists.

Fourth advantage is if I accept the Law of Karma, I can take responsibility for my future. I can take charge of my life. This is because the Law of Karma says my present situation is the result of my past action. You can extend this and say that my future situation will depend on my present action. Therefore if I can intelligently live in the present, I can influence my future. If I cannot totally control, I can greatly influence my future. Thus I can avert fatalism. I can accept my freewill. I have a freedom to choose my future because my future is dependent on my present Karma. Therefore Law of Karma restores my freewill and averts fatalistic tendencies.

People think Law of Karma leads to fatalism. In fact, Law of Karma alone is the antidote to fatalism because Law of Karma tells me I am responsible for my present situation by my past action and therefore am responsible for my future. If I don't accept the Law of Karma, my conclusion will be that somebody is responsible for my present situation. And if somebody else is responsible for my present situation, then somebody else will be responsible for my future situation.

Therefore if I don't accept the Law of Karma, I give my life to chance and fatalism. If I accept Law of Karma I am accepting my will and freedom to shape my future.

Fifth advantage is this answers one of the fundamental questions asked by many questioners – especially youngsters. When we talk about ethical way of life or good way of life, one of the questions asked by youngsters is – if you say ethical life is a blessing and unethical life is harmful, how come many good people are suffering and how come many corrupt people are having a good time. You can restore morality in society only if you bring in Law of Karma. Law of Karma will explain this phenomenon properly. It will say – the present ethical person is suffering because of past unethical action. Therefore the universal rule that Unethical Actions hurt is true irrespective of whether you are good in the present Janma or not. Even the current corrupt person enjoys because of past ethical actions. Therefore the rule is that Ethical Action Blesses and Unethical Action Hurts.

Thus Law of Karma is required for moral order in society.

We have to come back to Videha Muktihi. The Punya Pāpam or Adrishtam that a person

acquires is divided in to three types.

All the Punya Pāpams accumulated in the past Janma are called Sanchita Punya Pāpam or Sanchita Adrishtam. Sanchita means accumulated. And of all those accumulated, a portion alone is ready for fructification at a particular time. That maturing Adrishtam – Punya Pāpam - is called Prārabdha. Sanchitam will not affect you now because it is not matured. Whereas Prārabdha being matured, it is responsible for the present physical body. Your present body is determined by Prārabdha – human or animal, male or female, healthy or with congenital diseases, parentage, place of birth. And when Prārabdha gives you a human body, not only you reap your Prārabdha, but while reaping your Prārabdha, you are doing fresh actions. As a human being you do a lot of deliberate actions which will produces fresh Punya Pāpams. That fresh acquisitions or earning are called Āgāmi.

Therefore your present life is a result of your Āgāmi and Prārabdha. Because Āgāmi also produces result in this Janma. Prārabdha also produces result. Āgāmi and Prārabdha produced together will give you experiences. And some of the Āgāmi are not reaped in this Janma - so at the end of the Janma, Prārabdha is exhausted, some Āgāmi are exhausted, some Āgāmi Karma remain. They will join the Sanchitam and out of the Sanchitam, the next one gets ready giving you Punar Janma. There also you exhaust the Prārabdha and acquire Āgāmi, some of them are exhausted while some of them are kept back and they join Sanchita – the cycle will go on and on and on. This is the case of an ignorant person.

In the case of a wise person, the Shāstram point out, Jnānam is such a powerful radiation that it destroys all the Sanchita Karmāni.

*Sanchita Pāpa Vināshana Lingam
Tat Pranamāmi Sadāshiva Lingam.*

Because the Jnani, does not have identification with Reflected Consciousness – as he invokes the Original Consciousness all the time – Jnani does not acquire Āgāmi. Since he does not have Ahankāra or Abhimānam, he does not acquire Āgāmi. Hence even when Sanchitam is gone and Āgāmi does not come, only one remains which is the Prārabdha. Since it has started, it will continue to give pleasurable and painful experiences but these experiences will affect only the Reflecting Medium and Reflected Consciousness but the Jnani, being established in the highest “I” or Original Consciousness, does not bother much about these insignificant problems and therefore does not have any unhealthy responses. Therefore he is immunised against Prārabdha.

Once Prārabdha is exhausted : Sanchita is gone, Prārabdha is exhausted and Āgāmi avoided and therefore there is no Karma. Since there is neither Punyam nor Pāpam, he does not acquire a new birth. This called Videha Muktihi. Thus Jnani as a result of Jnānam enjoys Jīvan Mukti and Videha Mukti. This is Jnāna Phalam and with this Jnānam Phalam, Tattvabodha completes its teaching.

Monday, 21 April 2008

16. Overview of Tattvabodha

Over the last few sessions, we have covered the textbook of Tattvabodha in which all the important technical terms of Vedanta Shāstram have been beautifully presented. We saw all those topics in these classes.

Now we will wind up the Tattvabodha study by a bird's eye view of all the important topics that we have seen. Just a consolidating summary.

That Tattvabodha text can be broadly classified into five portions.

The first portion deals with the qualifications required for self-enquiry or Vedāntik study. Qualifications is therefore the first portion. In Sanskrit it is called Adhikāritvam meaning eligibility or Yogyatā.

The second part is the analysis of the individual. In Sanskrit individual is called Vyashtihi – microcosm. So Vyashtihi is the analysis of the micro.

The third portion is the analysis of the total. In Sanskrit, the Total is called Samashtihi. So Samashtihi Vichāra comes after Vyashti Vichāra. This is the analysis of the macrocosm.

The fourth portion is the essential one-ness of the individual and the total. The essential oneness of the individual and total. Vyashtihi Samashtihi Svarūpa Aikyam. Svarūpa means essential. Hence Svarūpa Aikyam means the essential identity of the micro and the macro.

The fifth and final topic is the knowledge of this essential identity and the benefit of this knowledge. Aikya Jnānam and Aikya Jnāna Phalam. Vyashti Samashtihi Svarūpa Aikya Jnānam – the knowledge of this essential oneness as well the benefit of this knowledge. In simple language Jnānam Phalam Cha.

16.1 Eligibility

What makes me qualified for spiritual enquiry. We saw fourfold qualification or Sādhana Chatushtayam. These are:

- Discrimination
- Dispassion
- Desire
- Discipline

Discrimination is between the real goal of life and all the other fake goals of life. There are so many fake or apparent or seeming goals and we should not be enamoured by these fake goals called Preyas. We should be able to identify the real goal. This capacity to differentiate the real goal of life from the fake goals of life is called Discrimination

Dispassion is reducing all the fake goals – like money position, possession, relation all of which are fake goals. Reducing all these fake goals into simple means only to attain the

real goal. So converting the fake goals into means and consequently not giving them undue importance. When you look upon them as goals, you give over-importance, but when the goal is reduced to means you give only the due importance. This removal of the undue importance from fake goals is dispassion. Passion is gone. Obsession is gone with regards to the fake goals of life.

Desire is a burning urge for the accomplishment of the real goal. Nourishment of the desire for the real goal of life and even a re-orienting of our life, our associations, our activities all these are reshuffled and re-oriented to nourish the desire for the real goal. Initially the desire is only a feeble and vague desire. But only by nourishing it would we be able to make it burning.

Discipline is attuning of all our organs for the realisation of or accomplishment the real goal. So this attuning of all the organs or making all the organs spiritual-knowledge-friendly. All the organs include the physical bodies, the sense organs, the mind and intellect.

Without this eligibility, if I enter into spiritual enquiry what can happen is that the enquiry can become unsuccessful and merely an academic study. So whether the spiritual enquiry should become an academic study or whether it should become a self-transforming exercise will depend on whether I have the eligibility or not. Therefore eligibility is emphasised.

Tattvabodha does not mention how to acquire the eligibility. That we have to supply. Of the four eligibility factors, the first three – Discrimination, Dispassion, Desire – are accomplished through Karma Yoga. The fourth and final discipline is accomplished through Upāsana Yoga or Ashtānga Yogaha or Samādhi Yogaha.

Thus through Karma Yoga acquire the first three qualifications and through Upāsana Yoga acquire the fourth qualification. And when I successfully go through Karma Yoga and Upāsana Yoga I am eligible for spiritual enquiry. If the first portion is called the Religious Way of life, spiritual enquiry is the Philosophical aspect of life. Religion gives me qualification and Philosophy gives me the wisdom.

16.2. Individual

The second part is the analysis of the individual. Here we have seen that every individual is broadly classified into two parts:

- Material part – Anātmā Amshaha
- Spiritual part – Ātmā Amshaha

For the convenience of understanding, the material part of the individual was divided into two ways.

- Body division:
 - a) Fine Gross,
 - b) Finer Subtle and

c) Finest Causal Body.

This division is purely based on the fineness of the matter. All are bodies and all are matter but the texture differs.

- Functional division:

- a) Anatomical part,
- b) Physiological part (functions of the Anatomy),
- c) Psychological part (emotional part),
- d) Rational (intellectual part dealing with the cognitive aspect)
- e) Unconscious or dormant aspect of personality which is not very clearly visible or perceptible.

Tattvabodha points out that other than the material part, is the spiritual part which is the consciousness principle Chaitanya Amshaha which is different from the five or three layers. This is aware of all of these. This is called the witness consciousness or Sākshitattvam or Chaitanya Tattvam. This consciousness is neither part of the material Amshaha nor a property of the material body nor the product of the material body. It is a distinct entity. This consciousness has a nature that it is not limited by the material part and it is not affected by the activities of the material part etc. This has been dealt with in the Ātmā topic. This spiritual part is called Ātmā and is given another name called Brahman.

16.3. Analysis of total

This topic is the analysis of the total, the Samashti, the Total or the universe. Jagat Vichāra or Srishti Vichāra are the words in Sanskrit. Here we say that the universe is never created. It is a very important idea which we have to receive and assimilate. This is because of the most important law that Matter can never be created or destroyed. Therefore Tattvabodha pointed out that the universe was there all the time. But it was not there in the same form all the time.

Now the universe is available in perceptible visible and transactable form. Previously the very same universe was existent in dormant unmanifest or potential form. And this potential form of this creation is called the causal universe otherwise known as Māyā. Māyā is another name for the universe itself but a name given when the universe is in dormant form. The universe is totally material in nature.

This causal universe at the appropriate time evolves. This evolution is wrongly called creation. Creation is a misnomer for the manifestation or evolution. Therefore we should never use the word creation but use the word manifestation. In Sanskrit this is called Āvirbhāvaha. Going into un-manifestation Tirobhāvaha. And it evolves in two stages:

First stage of evolution is the causal universe becomes the subtle universe. Subtle universe means it is neither totally unmanifest nor totally manifest like twilight. Later the grossest universe is manifested – this is the most visible, transactable, handle-able,

analysable universe. In fact scientists are only scratching the gross universe and have never been able to understand the subtle universe.

According to our Shāstram, this is an eternal process – causal evolving into subtle and gross, dances about for some time and again gets reduced into the causal form. This is just like us going to sleep everyday and then waking up. Wake state to dream (partial sleep) to deep sleep and then from deep sleep to dream (partial wake state) to fully awake state.

16.4. Aikyam – Oneness

We have three factors to study. The micro individual consisting of three layers – causal body, subtle body and gross body. We have the macro universe also consisting of three layers - causal universe, subtle universe and gross universe. Thus we have micro and macro.

We also have a third entity called consciousness principle which is different from both micro and macro. Micro and macro are eventually matter only.

Interestingly, micro matter and macro matter both being matter are both insentient in nature. But even though they are insentient, both are capable of functioning as a medium for consciousness. In Shāstram it is called Upādhihi. Just as the bulb and the filament do not have light of their own, but they have a capacity that they can function as a medium for the electricity. When it functions as a medium for electricity, the bulb becomes bright bulb. In the same way Micro and Macro are able to serve as bulbs as it were for consciousness. In consciousness, there is no micro or macro. In consciousness, Vyashti Samashti Bheda is not there – electricity is one whether the bulb is 5W or 5000W.

And when the consciousness functions through these two media, in keeping with the nature of the media, the consciousness gets a distortion which we called Reflected Consciousness. Hence Original Consciousness becomes Reflected Consciousness at the micro level and Reflected Consciousness at the macro level also.

Naturally the reflection will have distortion and in both media, distortion takes place. In the micro medium, since the medium is inferior, its gets distorted and endowed with inferior quality - Nikrushta Gunaha. Original Consciousness does not have any Guna – Nirguna. At this stage when Original Consciousness is manifest in Nikrushta Upādhi, it gets endowed with inferior attributes and is named Jīvaha. Jīvaha is Reflected Consciousness obtaining in inferior medium.

The very same Original Consciousness is manifest and functioning in the Macro as well. Since the macro medium is superior – Utkrushta Upādhi, there the distortion is positive distortion. Instead of getting no Gunaha, this does end up getting Gunaha (distortion). But the Gunaha are Utkrushta Upādhitvāt Krushta Gunāhā – superior attributes are there in macro Reflected Consciousness. This macro Reflected Consciousness with superior attributes is called Īshvara.

So Jīva is also Reflected Consciousness and Īshvara is also Reflected Consciousness. From Reflected Consciousness angle, they are totally different because one has got inferior attributes while the other has got superior attributes. One is helpless, other is helper. One is Anāthaha, the other is Anāthaha Nāthaha. One is Dīnaha, other is Dīnha Bandhuhu. One is Dāsaha, other is Swami. So the micro Reflected Consciousness is Dāsaha while the macro Reflected Consciousness is Swami. Original Consciousness is neither Dāsaha nor Swāmi because it does not have inferior attributes nor superior attributes, it is neither Kāryam nor Kāranam, neither micro nor macro. Therefore from Reflected Consciousness angle there is difference whereas, if you know, that Reflected Consciousness is nothing but Original Consciousness only but manifesting through a distorting medium.

An example is the effect of a concave and convex mirror on yourself. In one, there is an elongated face while in the other, there is a flat face. Now which one will I take as my true attribute ? Neither of them is my attribute. Elongation is one form of distortion while flatness is another form of distortion – I am free from both.

You cannot physically separate consciousness from the medium just as no physical thing can be separated from space which is all pervading. Similarly you can never separate micro medium or macro medium from consciousness. Therefore the separation has to be done in terms of understanding or wisdom. You separate the micro and macro medium and forget the distortions as incidental and own up the distortion-free Original Consciousness.

Aham Brahma Ātmā Asmi.

Aham Na Jīvaha Aham Na Īshvara.

Aham Jīva Īshvara Vyatirikta Brahmātmā (Original Consciousness) Asmi.

This is called Vyashti Samashti Svarūpa Aikyam. Jivātmā Paramātmā Aikyam. This portion is called Mahā Vākyam portion of the Shāstram. In any portion, the essential oneness is discussed and is called Mahāvākyam portion.

16.5. Aikya Jnānam and Aikya Jnāna Phalam

I have to receive this wisdom. And it should become my wisdom, a fact for me. And the pursuit of this wisdom is called Jnāna pursuit and it is called Jnāna Yogaha.

By analysing the individual, by analysing the total, arriving at the essential nature and seeing the fact that the essential nature is only one. Reflecting media are different and Reflected Consciousnesses is different but Original Consciousness the essence is one. This Jnāna Yoga consists of threefold exercise which we studied while discussing Jnāna Yoga. Karma Yoga and Upāsana Yoga give me eligibility and Jnāna Yoga gives me wisdom.

Without eligibility, wisdom cannot come. Without wisdom eligibility is useless. Therefore you require Karma Yoga and Upāsana Yoga compulsorily to get eligibility and you have to necessarily have Jnāna Yoga to attain wisdom. There is no choice among the three.

The threefold processes involved are:

- Receiving the wisdom : systematic consistent study of the scriptures for a length of time under the guidance of a competent teacher – called Shravanam.
- Converting knowledge into conviction which is removal of any doubts regarding this doubt. Intellect should not raise any objection. I should be thoroughly convinced that I am only Original Consciousness in the guise of Reflected Consciousness. Reflected Consciousness life is therefore only a drama about which I am not overly worried – called Mananam or removing the intellectual obstacles for this knowledge
- Nididhyāsanam – assimilation of this wisdom by which I learn to get out of old habits of living. I have lived all my time as Reflected Consciousness – the Sāmsarik way of life, rife with worries, insecurities and anxious. By living such a life it has become my second nature and I have been conditioned to live that way. Nididhyāsanam is the de-conditioning process and re-orienting. Just like de-twisting a telephone wire to make it normal. It is in the form of repeated hearing, reading the Shāstram, writing, discussing, teaching etc. Knowledge is now called Nishthā.

Hence the goal is converting knowledge into conviction and conviction into Nishthā – Nishthā is total transformation. Transformation can be translated as Transcending Form. When I own up I am Original Consciousness whose form is formless. Therefore converting the formed I into the formless I is transcending the form – transformation. This transformation is called Jīvan Muktihi. Thus one gets knowledge through Shravanam, Mananam and Nididhyāsanam.

Jnāna Phalam is the total transformation – not physical but psychological. Where life which was a burden before becomes a sport later. Problems will be converted into challenges. There is no change in the world and people, there is only change in my very way of looking. This transformed life is called Jīvan Muktihi and as a result of this Jnānam, a person gets over all the Punya Pāpa Karmāni as well. Sanchita Karma , Āgāmi Karma Prārabdha Karma.

- Sanchita Karma – is burnt up
- Āgāmi Karma – is avoided
- Prārabdha Karma – is exhausted without adverse reaction

Once the three Karmas are gone, the body falls and a person is never reborn again. Another body is not required because no more Karma to be exhausted. And the absence of rebirth is called Videha Muktihi. Punar Janma Abhāvaha.

Hence Jīvan Muktihi and Videha Muktihi are the twofold results of Jnānam. And this result a person will attain wherever he dies, and whenever he dies.



Om Pūrnamadah Pūrnamidam
Pūrnāt Pūrnāmudachyate
Pūrnasya Pūrnāmādāya
Pūrnamevāvashishyate
Om Shānti Shānti Shānti

That (Brahman) is whole
This (creation) is also whole
From that whole (i.e. Brahman only)
This whole has come out (creation)
But even though this whole has come
Out of that whole
Yet that whole remains whole only.

**End of Comments on
Tattvabodha
by Swami Paramarthananda
of Chennai**

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Purpose:

aprameyaha

I am a student of Vedanta. Through this blog, I want everyone to benefit from the wonderful teachings of Swāmi Paramārthānanda. Hari Om

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